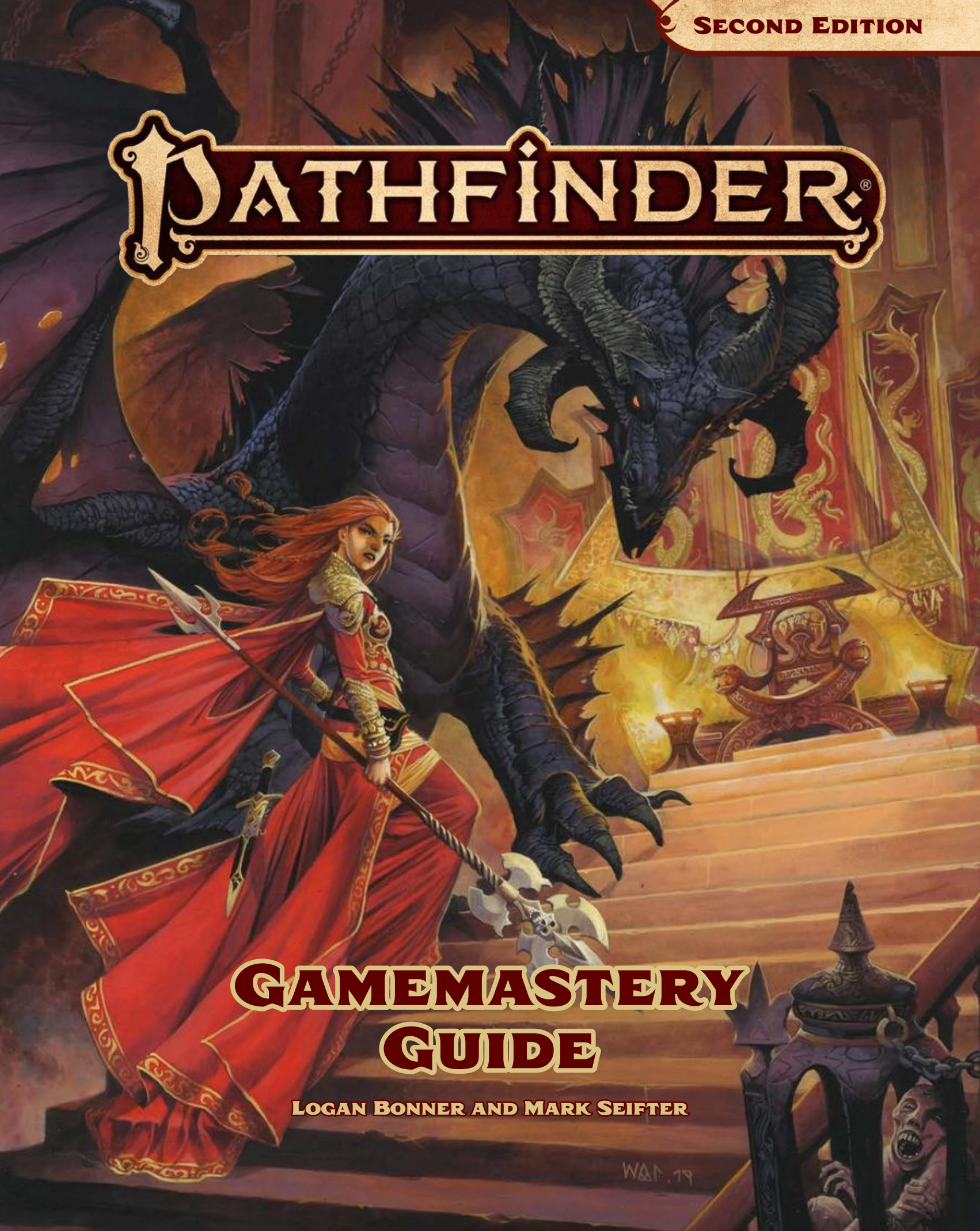


SECOND EDITION

PATHFINDER[®]

GAMEMASTERY GUIDE

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GAMEMASTERY GUIDE



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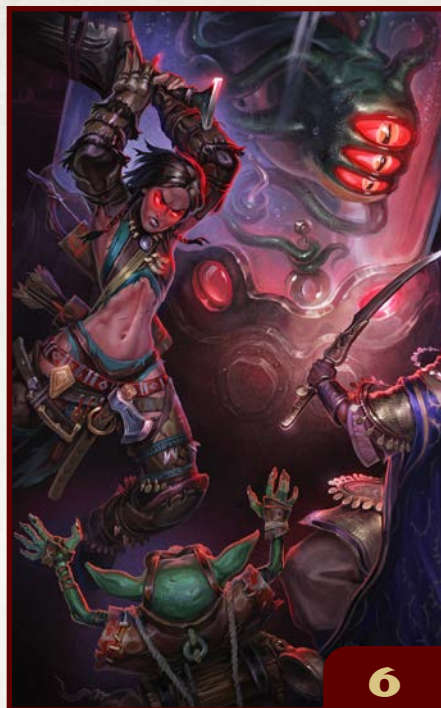
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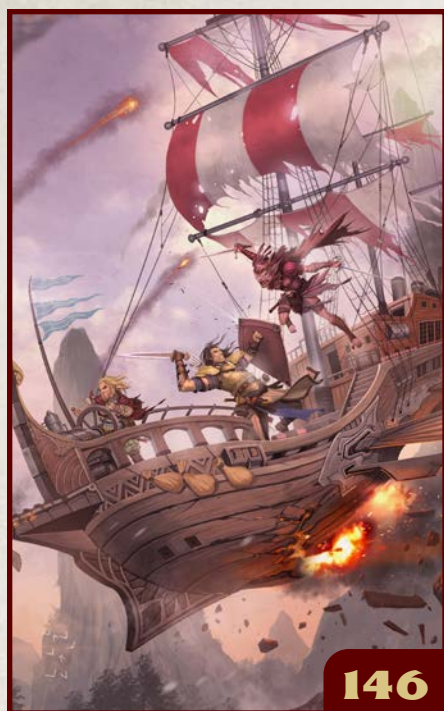
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INTRODUCTION

The focus of every Pathfinder game is the players—their characters are the stars of the show and appear in every scene that plays out in game. But what about those scenes? What stories are being told? What old legends are being discovered, and what new ones are being forged? Who are the villains, the allies, the traitors, the lovers, the monsters, and the gods? Who runs the world? When you're the Game Master, that's all up to you!

THE GAME MASTER

In a game of Pathfinder, the Game Master (often abbreviated GM) is the player in charge of the story and the world the other players are exploring with their characters. As the GM, you set the stage for the adventure, show how the rest of the world responds to the player characters' actions, and guide the action along an engaging storyline. It falls to you to describe the characters' surroundings, the threats facing them, and the creatures they interact with. You're presenting the challenges the heroes must overcome, whether that's a deadly trap of haunted blades in a lost tomb full of ancient treasures or a vicious troll threatening the heroes' home village. It also comes to you to interpret and adjudicate the rules. Game Mastering involves many more components than playing a character, but it's a fun and tremendously rewarding experience.

Though the word "master" is in the GM's title, it's not a role that requires or even benefits from absolutism. Pathfinder is a collaborative experience, and while your role as the Game Master is one of an adjudicator or a moderator, it doesn't mean you control everything at the table—especially not the players and their characters. Nor does the role require mastery, either of the rules or the setting. You'll need to understand the game, but you don't need to have every rule memorized. When everyone shares the goal of having fun and telling a story together, the details will fall into place.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The *Gamemastery Guide* is one of the central rule books for Pathfinder. It's not required to play the game, but it builds upon the basic guidelines provided in the Game Mastering chapter of the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*,

and you'll find it helpful to read that chapter before delving into this book. This book provides more detail on those topics, as well as many more tools to help you make your game a fun and memorable experience for everyone involved.

Throughout most of this book, "you" refers to the Game Master. In some sections of player-facing material, however, such as some player-focused variant rules and the actions for certain subsystems, "you" instead refers to the player using that material.

Pathfinder as a game is all about customization, and this book provides you as the Game Master ways to customize your game just as a player customizes their character. The toolbox nature of the *Gamemastery Guide* makes it easy to take and use whatever components you need for the game you're running at any time. As with any toolbox, you won't need to use everything at once!

CHOOSING YOUR TOOLS

The tools of this book you'll use most depend on what kind of Game Master you are, what your players want, and the story you're telling together.

No two Game Masters are the same. Perhaps you're a veteran Game Master who's looking for new ways to customize the game and tailor it to suit your interests and those of your players. Or perhaps you're a brand new GM and looking for guidance to feel comfortable leading a game of your own. Maybe you've been a Game Master for years, but this is your first time running a Pathfinder game. No matter where you are as a Game Master, this book is a valuable tool that can help you tell the stories you want to tell with your players.

If you're a newer Game Master, you'll find a wealth of information to help you feel confident in running your games. Chapter 1 in particular can help you better understand how to run a game in the different modes of play, how to adjudicate the rules quickly and fairly, and what to do when special circumstances or problems crop up at your table. This chapter also contains advice on using and determining rarity in your game, working with your players to create a collaborative story, and adapting your game to meet the needs of the players at your table. You'll also find the NPC Gallery in Chapter 5 useful as a source of stock NPCs to play a role in your game and also for examples to compare against when using the rules in Chapter 2 to build your own monsters and NPCs.

If you're a Game Master running a published Pathfinder adventure, you'll find guidance in Chapter 1 specifically for running published adventures, and much

of the advice in that chapter about running a game applies to published adventures. A number of adventures—especially scenarios in the Pathfinder Society Organized Play campaign and Pathfinder Adventure Path volumes—use the subsystems in Chapter 3. The Victory Points subsystem is the most fundamental of these, but many adventures also use the other subsystems found here, such as vehicles, chases, and influence.

If you are looking to create your own Pathfinder adventures, Chapter 1 provides you design guidance ranging from the broad strokes of an entire campaign, to individual adventures, and then to the particular considerations of any given encounter. Chapter 2 is a veritable toolbox you can use to build the creatures, hazards, items, and other elements you want to use in your adventures. If you plan to set your adventures in a world of your own design, the world-building section of Chapter 2 can guide that process and help you establish the details you'll need to ensure your setting is a vibrant backdrop for fantastic adventure. The NPC Gallery in Chapter 5 can help populate your story and world so that you don't have to create every element from scratch.

If you're an experienced Game Master, you will find a wealth of customization options to tailor your games to the needs of players. The advice in Chapter 1, such as the guidance to make encounters more dynamic, can help you fine-tune your GM skills and enrich your game. Using the tools in Chapter 2, you'll be able to build precisely the option you need for any game. Chapter 3 offers a variety of rules subsystems that provide a framework for specific endeavors and situations, from chases and duels to social influence and overland exploration. In Chapter 4, you'll find variant rules options that let you tweak specific elements of the game, from backgrounds to the entire mathematical underpinning of the game, to suit your preferences or the needs of a particular setting or story.

REMEMBER THE FIRST RULE

The first rule of Pathfinder is that this game is yours. The rest of the rules exist for you to use to tell the stories you want to tell and share exciting adventures with your friends. There are plenty of rules in this book, but none of them overrule that first rule. Take the rules that help you make the game you want, change those that don't do quite what you need them to, and leave the ones that aren't helping. It's your game. There's no right or wrong way to GM so long as everyone is having fun—and that includes you!



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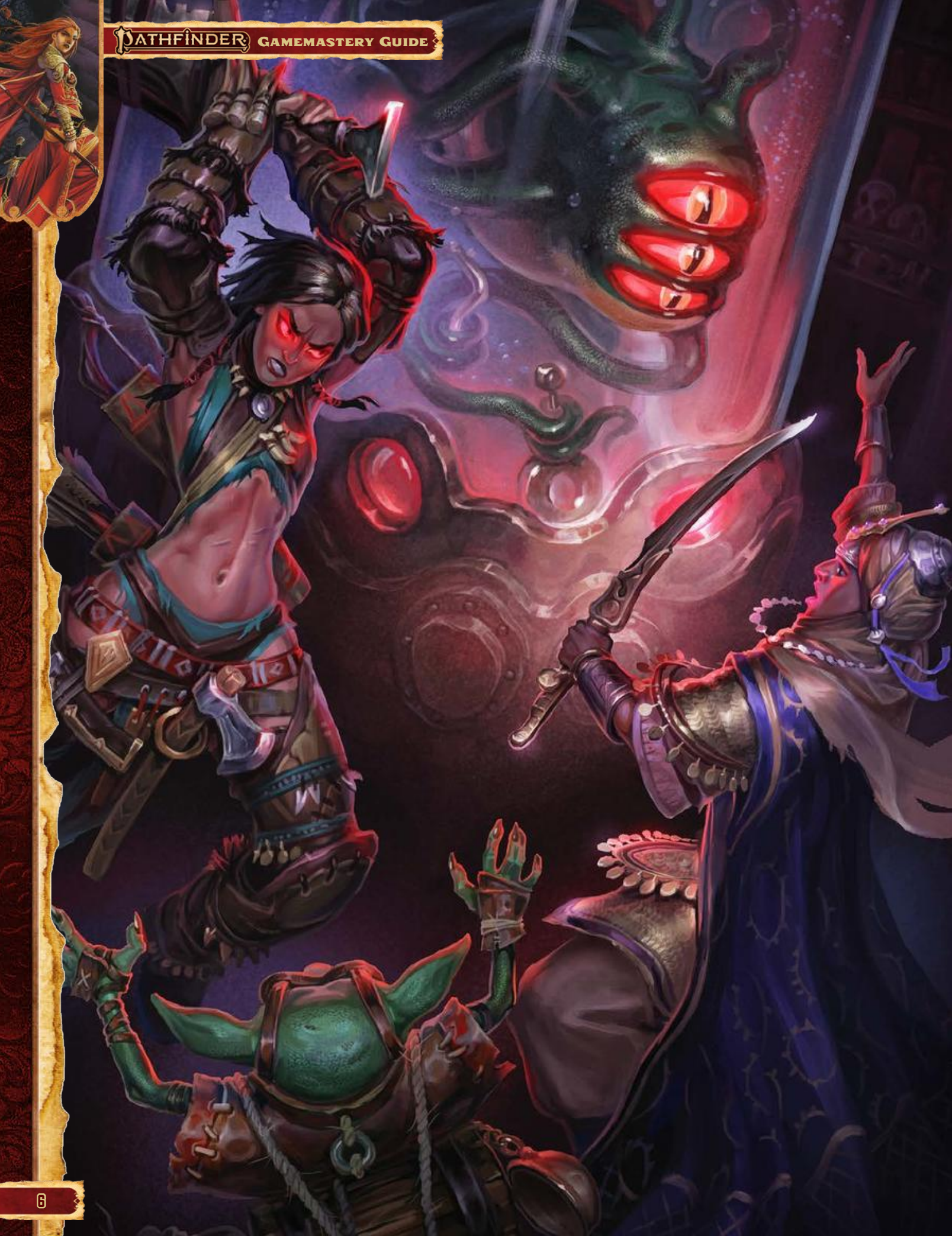
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CHAPTER 1: GAMEMASTERY BASICS

The role of a GM can be complex, challenging, and sometimes difficult, but ultimately rewarding. Luckily, you're not on your own! Not only will the other players at your game table help you tell collaborative stories, but you can use the advice here to make your games run more smoothly and feel more exciting.

The information presented here provides helpful guidance on how to be a dynamic and engaging GM, and supplements the GM advice found in Chapter 10 of the *Core Rulebook*. Some sections either refer back to that chapter or repeat some of that information for convenience. This chapter begins with general advice, then covers the following topics.

- **Running Encounters** (page 10) is the first of three sections that explains the three modes of play in more detail. You'll find help on tracking initiative, improving the speed of play, running special battles, and more.
- **Running Exploration** (page 17) gives details on making exploration activities more interesting, creating an evocative environment, lost PCs, and more.
- **Running Downtime** (page 22) covers ways the PCs can set goals, explains how to make good downtime events, provides sample downtime tasks, and more.
- **Adjudicating Rules** (page 28) offers guidance on how to make effective rules calls and create house rules.
- **Resolving Problems** (page 30) presents advice on total party kills, problem players, and power imbalances.
- **Narrative Collaboration** (page 32) includes tools for players to control the story more directly.
- **Special Circumstances** (page 33) discusses organized play, odd-sized groups, and players with different needs.
- **Rarity in Your Game** (page 35) details how rarity can enrich the theme and story of your game.
- **Campaign Structure** (page 36) clarifies what makes a good campaign and describes how to determine its scope and make enemies and treasure more compelling.
- **Adventure Design** (page 40) includes tools for building your own adventures.
- **Encounter Design** (page 46) explains how to build entertaining encounters and navigate the challenges that can arise when designing complex encounters.
- **Drawing Maps** (page 52) describes useful steps for making maps and commonly used map symbols.

GENERAL ADVICE

This section covers topics related to running the game. If you want to know how to build specific types of new content, this information can be found throughout Chapter 2 in sections such as Building Creatures (page 56), Building Worlds (page 122), and Settlements (page 132).

Both the *Core Rulebook* and this book explore many topics, but don't feel like you have to master them all to be a good GM! It's important to remember you're not perfect, and the other players won't expect you to be. Trial and error, mistakes and triumphs—they're all part of running any game.

SESSION ZERO

Some groups prefer to have everyone create their characters in advance and show up ready to play. However, getting the group together to make characters can be fun, and can benefit your game down the line. A session for building characters is commonly called "session zero." Session zero is typically shorter than other game sessions, so you might plan a short introductory scene for after everyone's finished building their characters, or just hang out and do something else after you've planned your characters.

Having a session zero lets players share character details, making it easier for their characters to have links and relationships with one another before the adventure starts, and gives players the chance to become invested in each other's characters by organically learning what decisions other players made. These sessions also give veterans the chance to help less experienced players through character creation. Lastly, session zero can give you a better understanding of the characters and help the players integrate them into the adventure in interesting ways.

PACING GAME SESSIONS

Page 489 of the *Core Rulebook* explains how to structure, start, and run a game session. This is all part of pacing your game. Most sessions should have lulls in the action punctuated by challenges such as intense encounters, puzzle-based exploration, and investigation. Presenting players with a variety of such obstacles can help them feel more engaged at the table. Information flow matters, too. If the group meets a large number of NPCs in short order, that can make it harder for them to remember individuals. It helps to break things up into smaller scenes and memorable moments.

Knowing when to end a session takes practice. About 20 minutes before a play session is scheduled to conclude, it can be beneficial to figure out how you'd like to end. It can be memorable to end with a cliffhanger—a moment so curious and abrupt it raises questions about what happens next. Examples include ending play before combat, when the PCs find vital information, or as they discover treasure. Doing so can inspire the PCs to discuss the game between sessions. Note anything that could be satisfying to resolve over media, such as email. This could include divvying up treasure, leveling up, or completing downtime tasks.

STAKES AND CONSEQUENCES

A GM should always convey a clear picture of the stakes and consequences of the PCs' actions or inaction. What horrible things will happen if the PCs fail? What can they

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achieve if they go beyond what's expected of them? A well-constructed adventure conveys the stakes at the outset, but it's also important to remind the players of those stakes throughout play. The *Core Rulebook* summarizes the scale of the stakes for each mode of play, and these are varied on purpose. A game where the stakes are extremely high all the time cuts out the opportunity for low-key scenes, and can be overwhelming or even monotonous. In most games, players enjoy having some scenes where their characters can relax and socialize with low stakes as well.

Consequences should be specific and evocative. Don't just tell the players what happened after their characters' success or failure; let their characters witness it in the world. Are they greeted as heroes by townsfolk? Does the bastion of evil crack and shudder, falling apart as the PCs escape? Does a failure lead to the death of an ally and a somber funeral? It's usually best if the PCs can foresee the consequences, at least in a general sense. If a villain demonstrates their intention to conquer a city, and the PCs don't stop them, then the city gets conquered. It's OK if you have an idea for an interesting subversion occasionally, but keep those to a minimum or the chain of cause and effect will become too muddy.

You can emphasize consequences by awarding PCs accomplishment XP (*Core Rulebook* 507). It serves as a good reminder to the players, reinforcing their success.

FAILING FORWARD

An unexpected failure can bring the game to a halt, particularly during exploration. "Failing forward" means finding a way to progress the story instead of just saying, "That didn't work." This doesn't mean that the group can't fail, or that the PCs should get what they wanted despite failing. Rather, it means that a failure might still impart more information, reveal a way to improve their chances next time, or even cause unforeseen difficulties. Doing so means the player's choice to attempt a check *mattered*, even if the results weren't what they wanted. Allowing the PCs to fail forward means fewer dead ends and perfunctory checks. It's important however, not to put unnecessary pressure on yourself to do so all the time. Sometimes you won't know immediately how a PC can fail forward, and in those cases, it's usually best to just move on.

IMPROVISATION

As a GM, you often make things up on the fly. You can find tips for improvising rules on page 491 of the *Core Rulebook* and within the Adjudicating Rules section of this book (pages 28–29). When an issue seems to pertain to the story instead of the rules, ask yourself the following questions.

- Does something already established in our story so far tell me what should happen here?
- If an NPC is involved, what would their personality lead them to do?
- What does the player expect to happen?
- What would best fit the themes of our story?

You might not have a good answer for every question, but asking them can inspire useful solutions. If what you need to invent is significant in the storyline or world, there's nothing wrong with asking the group to take a little break while you fill in the gap. If it's not particularly significant and you can't come up with anything more compelling, it's also okay to say, "Nothing happens," and move on.

Often, a player will ask, "What happens when I do that?" This is a good indicator that the player expects that what they've done will draw a reaction from an NPC or the environment. Unless the player is way off base, provide an in-game response, even if it's minor. The player has telegraphed what matters to them, and the perceived importance of their action can draw them into the game.

FALSE INFORMATION

A critical failure to Recall Knowledge can result in you needing to convey false information, requiring some improvisation. If you aren't careful, this information can be perceived by the PCs as too silly, or could derail the game. For example, if a PC misinterpreted text about the god of commerce, Abadar, saying they believe the god is an incompetent chaotic spendthrift who's bad with money is absurd. Similarly, if they incorrectly believe Abadar will reward them with great wealth if they ring bells in four different temple corners, this could send them on a tangent.

Providing false information can cause the PCs to make mistakes, but the consequences should typically be immediate rather than continual or far in the future. Avoid dispensing false information that might not be used for hours or entire sessions, after the check is forgotten. If you're unsure, the safest form of false information is information that's wrong but not in a way that causes major consequences. Remember that a critical failure says you get incorrect information, not that you get important-seeming false information. Erroneously believing Abadar's symbol is a set of scales instead of a key might lead to a miscommunication, but one that's not dangerous, pretty easy to clear up, and only a little embarrassing for the PC.

SECRET CHECKS

During play, you roll some checks in secret instead of allowing the player to do so, as explained on page 450 of the *Core Rulebook*. This rule helps ensure that a player remains uncertain at times when their character is unsure of how a situation may resolve, immersing the player in their character's perspective. It can be handy to keep a list of the PCs' modifiers on hand to help you roll secret checks more quickly. At least, you should record each player's Perception modifier, their saving throw modifiers (especially Will), and the skill modifiers of any skills they often use to Recall Knowledge. Check in anytime the PCs level up, and consider asking the players to update you when any of these modifiers change.

You can still have the players roll the checks even if an action has the secret trait. This is usually best done when

the results are going to be immediate or when stakes are low, like when the PC is trying to recall something during downtime that they'll see is false through the course of their research. You can instead have the players handle all their rolls, secret or otherwise. This works best when the group is interested in leaning into the dramatic irony of knowing a PC is wrong and playing up their characters' mistakes.

HERO POINTS

Page 507 of the *Core Rulebook* offers guidelines for determining how many Hero Points to award and when to do so. These recommendations are flexible. Consider Hero Points a way to reinforce your personal style of Game Mastering and to reward what you value during play. The toughest part of awarding Hero Points can be remembering to do it! Keeping a Hero Point token on hand in front of you can provide a visual and tactile reminder. You can also solicit help from your players by asking them to remind you when they think a PC's action merits a Hero Point.

METAGAMING

Knowledge the players have that their characters don't is called "metagame knowledge," and using it to influence characters' decisions is called "metagaming." Some metagaming results naturally from play and is wise to disregard. The wizard aiming a *fireball* precisely enough to include three enemies in the very edge of the spell's area is probably unrealistic, but isn't that disruptive to play. Things get more questionable if the player says, "That's a rakshasa, so don't use divine spells against it," regardless of whether their character has encountered a rakshasa before or identified the creature. Each group is different, and the assumption of what the characters know varies. If metagaming starts to get out of hand, you might just use some gentle reminders, like, "I'm not sure your character's aware of that," or, "Can you explain your character's thinking when they do that?" If the problem persists, see the guidelines mentioned in the Problematic Players section on page 31.

PORTRAYING NPCs

Although the PCs are the stars of the game, NPCs make the world around the PCs vibrant. They can become a part of the story, sometimes for years, weaving into the story right alongside the PCs. Portray NPCs however it works for you. Some GMs keep it simple, describing the NPCs simply by their looks, or their hook (see below). Others go into more detail, using accents, mannerisms, or acting.

Because NPCs have smaller roles than PCs, imparting enough information to convey their identities while they interact with the party can be challenging. When you create an NPC, start by integrating a single "hook" into their concept: a widowed merchant, a refugee from a distant realm, or a child who constantly asks awkward questions. Each hints at a backstory but is easily described in a synopsis. If the NPC continues to interact with the party, you can then add to their backstory later.

NPC LIMITATIONS

Always remember that the PCs have the greatest role in your story. Avoid including allied NPCs who could easily solve any problem the PCs get assigned. An extremely powerful NPC should be engaged with matters beyond what the PCs are tasked with or have some limitation that necessitates the PCs' involvement. Remember that an NPC is not "your character" in the way each player has a character. Though NPCs who travel with the party can be effective and fun when handled with caution, an NPC who effectively acts as the GM's character is often called a GMPC (Game Master Player Character) and can contribute to a feeling that the players are being coerced into making certain decisions.

BETRAYAL

NPCs, even allies, can shift allegiances. They might betray, fail, or sell out their companions, which can make for a meaningful story event. If an NPC is betraying the party in some way, lay groundwork early on so the players don't feel ambushed by the twist. If the players can look back and see a clear path to this result, it is likely they'll feel the decision makes sense in the context of the story. Try to give the NPC a "tell" or a paper trail they can detect.

RESPECTING THE CHARACTER

Sometimes, when creating characters, a GM can unintentionally play into themes that can be harmful or hurtful. For example, an NPC with a background of abuse, a former or current slave, or a character with disabilities requires respectful handling. This is particularly true if you, as the GM, do not have the same life experience as the NPC in question. If you want to include these themes for an NPC, you should probably bring it up with your players beforehand and set expectations. You don't need to spoil the character, but sitting down and checking in with your players can help prevent unpleasant surprises and is better than assuming. To keep the representation respectful, avoid clichés and don't use the hook as a joke. Your group's guidelines for objectionable content (*Core Rulebook* 486) can also help you portray NPCs respectfully.

A PROPER END

An NPC's story should have a satisfying ending. The NPC might leave your story when they achieve a major goal, go on to other adventures, give up their dream, or die. The death of a beloved NPC should have weight. Make it sympathetic and powerful, and ideally have it take place "on stage" with the PCs present. Be prepared that NPC deaths might stir up strong emotions within the group, and be prepared to cut the session short or to fade to black to mitigate the full brunt of the event if necessary. An NPC's death should matter beyond the PCs' emotions or search for revenge, too—maybe the NPC's sacrifice saved a village or inspired others. Let players see that legacy carried on.

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RUNNING ENCOUNTERS

Running engaging encounters can require you to track a lot of different information. Knowing what details to prioritize can make encounters easier to run and more fun to play.

This section provides tips to help you run encounters that are fast and entertaining to play. Though the *Core Rulebook* discusses running encounters starting on page 493, this section supplements that information. Though this chapter contains detailed advice about many topics, it's important to remember that, as a GM, you should primarily focus on the following tasks.

- Answering questions quickly and decisively whenever possible.
- Building anticipation for what happens next.
- Emphasizing thrilling action and setting a rapid pace.
- Letting players know when they're up, and preferably when they're "on deck" to go next.
- Showing the immediate consequences of actions.

If you're interested in building on the topics in this section, information on designing combat encounters appears on page 46. Additionally, Chapter 3 presents subsystems used in special types of encounters, such as the influence subsystem.

SPEED OF PLAY

Encounters should move quickly, giving the PCs just enough time to savor successes and lament failures. This requires effort from everyone, but you can make it easier by running creatures and NPCs efficiently. First off, don't worry too much about little mistakes you make when running encounters. If you forgot to apply a creature's special bonus or didn't take an action that would have prevented the creature from taking damage, it's not a big deal. Keep an eye on what you emphasize during the adventure, as well. Be quick when describing a normal attack, but spend a little more time on a critical hit or a big spell. This all boils down to significance. It's fine to slow down the game for something important, but it's best to move briskly through anything less important. As you run the game, you'll quickly develop a sense for what's significant and what's not.

LOOKING UP RULES

One of the primary ways the game slows down is when you or another player needs to look up a rule. For something that isn't too impactful, it's better to just make a ruling on the spot and move on. Tell the player they can look it up when it's not their turn, and you'll play it as written after that, but that the game needs to move on in the meantime. It's okay to look up something that's both significant and heavily rules-dependent, such as a spell description or the death and dying rules. Even then, reciting a full chunk of rules text can pull players out of the flow of play, so summarize. It also helps to train your players to look things up in advance if they think they'll need them, so they're ready to go when their turns come around. This

can be tough as a GM, since it's essentially always your turn. However, you can ask a player to look something up for you, or, if you need to pause long enough to reference certain books, remind the players to plan for their next turns while you're busy.

REWINDING

Though "rewinding" can happen in any mode of play, it's usually most troublesome in encounters. Rewinding happens when a player forgot to add in a certain bonus or take a certain action, or wishes they had used their actions in a different order, and wants to rewind to account for what they missed. The best policy is usually to let them rewind as needed within their own turn but stop them before they intrude into someone else's. This keeps interruptions within reasonable bounds. You might find some adjustments are easy enough to make outside of a turn and can be allowed. For instance, if someone forgot to add the fire damage from a *flaming* rune to one of their hits, it's pretty easy to reduce the monster's HP on another turn, but if they realized their attack missed only because they forgot the bonus from *bless*, that could be too much of an interruption. Your ruling should stand on such matters. Try to be consistent about what kinds of things you will rewind for and when.

COMPLEX ROLLS

You'll often make multiple rolls at the same time, especially when attempting saving throws for multiple creatures against area or multi-target spells. This can sometimes take a considerable amount of time if you're resolving the result of each creature's save and then determining its degree of success. To do so quickly, you could use one of the following techniques. Each of the examples below uses a PC's spell as an example, but these recommendations also apply to similar rolls that aren't caused by spells.

- Get the PC's Difficulty Class first, and have the player roll damage while you roll the saving throws.
- Use separate colors of dice for the different types of foes, or arrange the dice in such a way that it's easier for you to tell which creatures or NPCs are which.
- Go in order from the best enemy results (the highest total) to the worst. This means you'll need to ask for the results on a success only once, the damage on a failure once, and so on. It also means you only need to figure out when you're moving to a lower degree of success, rather than recalculating them each time.

This can be more of a challenge when asking for PC rolls. Make sure you get the attention of every player whose PC is affected. Have them all roll but hold off on

announcing their results. While they roll their saves, roll damage or other variable effects. Then, announce the DC. Say, “who critically succeeded?” “who succeeded?” and so on down the line, so you only have to share the results for each category once. You can choose not to announce the DC if you want and ask for results by multiples of 10 instead, but it typically takes longer, and it’s still possible that the players can determine or estimate the DC anyway.

ENEMY TACTICS

As noted on page 493 of the *Core Rulebook*, enemies don’t need to make perfect decisions. It’s usually better to make a decision quickly than to pick the perfect enemy tactic. The chaos of combat, desperation, or ego could all cause a villain to make a poor decision, and that’s something you can play up if you realize they’ve done so, acting out the foe’s response to their own folly, or chiding them through the sarcastic remark of one of their allies.

INITIATIVE

The rules for rolling initiative can be found on page 468 of the *Core Rulebook*, and the GM guidelines on 498. Below you’ll find specifics on how to run certain types of initiative or deal with problems. These are guidelines, and you might prefer to execute initiative in a different way at your table.

When do you ask players to roll initiative? In most cases, it’s pretty simple: you call for the roll as soon as one participant intends to attack (or issue a challenge, draw a weapon, cast a preparatory spell, start a social encounter such as a debate, or otherwise begin to use an action that their foes can’t help but notice). A player will tell you if their character intends to start a conflict, and you’ll determine when the actions of NPCs and other creatures initiate combat. Occasionally, two sides might stumble across one another. In this case, there’s not much time to decide, but you should still ask if anyone intends to attack. If the PCs and NPCs alike just want to talk or negotiate, there is no reason to roll initiative only to drop out of combat immediately!

INITIATIVE AND STEALTH

When one or both sides of an impending battle are being stealthy, you’ll need to deal with the impacts of Stealth on the start of the encounter. Anyone who’s Avoiding Notice should attempt a Stealth check for their initiative. All the normal bonuses and penalties apply, including any bonus for having cover. You can give them the option to roll Perception instead, but if they do they forsake their Stealth and are definitely going to be detected.

To determine whether someone is undetected by other participants in the encounter, you still compare their Stealth check for initiative to the Perception DC of their enemies. They’re undetected by anyone whose DC they meet or exceed. So what do you do if someone rolls better than everyone else on initiative, but all their foes beat their Perception DC? Well, all the enemies are

undetected, but not unnoticed. That means the participant who rolled high still knows someone is around, and can start moving about, Seeking, and otherwise preparing to fight. The characters Avoiding Notice still have a significant advantage, since that character needs to spend actions and attempt additional checks in order to find them.

What if both sides are sneaking about? They might just sneak past each other entirely, or they might suddenly run into one another if they’re heading into the same location.



SETTING THE SCENE

When an encounter begins, spend a moment to describe the location if you haven't already. Use some of the description tips found in *Evocative Environments* on page 17. It can help to describe where enemies are within the environment, to better ground them in the location. You can also use the enemies' expressions to better convey the location. Is an enemy in a wary stance as they stand near a pit? Is another irritated by water dripping on it from the ceiling? Does a glowing glyph illuminate an enemy with a sinister red light?

BATCH INITIATIVE

If you have multiple enemies of the same type, such as four goblin warriors, you might want to have them act on the same initiative for simplicity. If you do, you can roll just one initiative check for all of them. They still take individual turns and can still individually change their initiative by Delaying. Note that a lucky initiative check could mean the batched creatures can easily gang up on the PCs, and a terrible roll could mean they all get struck down before they can do anything, so use this technique only when necessary to keep the game moving.

PLACING CHARACTERS ON THE MAP

If the PCs are already moving on a grid, as often happens in small dungeons, you already know where they are when they roll initiative. If they're moving in free-form exploration, place them on the map when they roll initiative. The fastest way is to have the players set up their miniatures in a basic marching order ahead of time, then just move them onto the map in that formation. When that doesn't work, such as when one or more PCs were in a different location or the map doesn't fit the marching order, you can either set up the PC minis yourself, then ask if everybody is happy with where they are, or have the players place their own minis. If you find having the players do it themselves causes too much indecision (especially if they try to count out distances in advance), you can switch methods. Remember to place characters using Stealth in reasonable places to hide, even if that means you have to adjust the marching order to do so.

INAPPROPRIATE SKILLS

As described in the *Core Rulebook* on page 489, you can allow PCs to roll skills other than Perception (or Stealth when Avoiding Notice) for initiative. You might find that once a player gets to use a stronger skill for initiative, they'll keep trying to use it for future encounters. As long as the narrative plays out in a reasonable manner, it's fine to allow the skill. If you find that they start making up odd circumstances to use their pet skill, or that their justifications for using the skill take too long at the table, just tell them you'd like them to go back to using Perception for a while.

AD HOC BONUSES AND PENALTIES

This section covers a few ground rules for how to best respond to PC tactics, when to apply ad hoc bonuses and penalties, and when to use certain tactics for NPCs. When PCs put effort into getting advantages against their foes, there should be some payoff provided their tactics make sense in the narrative. Ad hoc bonuses and penalties give you some mechanical tools to emphasize that. Also keep in mind that you can change the flow of the story to respond to tactics as well. Changing an enemy's behavior can be a more satisfying consequence than just getting a bonus.

When you're determining whether to grant a special bonus that's not defined in the rules, including when a player asks you whether they get a bonus for doing something, ask yourself the following questions.

- Is this the result of an interesting, surprising, or novel strategy by the character?
- Did this take effort or smart thinking to set up?
- Is this easy to replicate in pretty much every battle?

If you answered yes to any of the first two, it's more likely you should assign a bonus—typically a +1 or +2 circumstance bonus. However, if you answered yes to the third, you probably shouldn't unless you really do want to see that tactic used over and over again.

Try to use ad hoc bonuses a little more often than ad hoc penalties. If you do think a penalty might be appropriate, ask yourself the following.

- Does the environment or terrain create any applicable disadvantages for the character?
- Should the character have expected this would be more difficult based on what they already knew?
- Was this circumstance caused by a bad decision on the part of the one taking the penalty?
- Is this negative circumstance easy to replicate in pretty much every battle?

Once again, answering yes to most of these questions means it is more likely you should apply a penalty, and answering yes to the final question means it less likely you should do so.

ADJUDICATING ACTIONS

Some of the basic actions of the game require you to interpret how a rule should apply. Here, you'll find advice the types of rules calls that can occur frequently. For rules decisions that are either/or (such as whether a creature can Aid or Take Cover), a PC can usually determine before they take the action whether doing so is viable; if it isn't viable for some reason, alert them that it won't work before they spend time, actions or resources trying. There are some exceptions, especially if the reason an action wouldn't work is something a character wouldn't know. For example, if a character tries to Take Cover behind a wall, not realizing it's illusory, you shouldn't reveal the deception prematurely.

AID

It's up to you whether someone's preparation is enough to let them Aid an ally. The preparation should be specific to the task at hand. Helping someone hold a lockpick steady might be enough preparation to Aid an attempt to Pick a Lock, but just saying you're going to "encourage" them likely wouldn't. Second, the character who is attempting to Aid needs to be in a proper position to help, and able to convey any necessary information. Helping a character Climb a wall is pretty tough if the character a PC wishes to Aid is nowhere near them. Similarly, a character usually needs to be next to their ally or a foe to Aid the ally in attacking the foe. You'll also need to determine how long the preparation takes. Typically, a single action is sufficient to help with a task that's completed in a single round, but to help someone perform a long-term task, like research, the character has to help until the task is finished.

READY

The Ready activity lets the acting person choose the trigger for their readied action. However, you might sometimes need to put limits on what they can choose. Notably, the trigger must be something that happens in the game world and is observable by the character rather than a rules concept that doesn't exist in world. For instance, if a player says, "I Ready to shoot an arrow at her if she uses a concentrate action," or "I Ready to attack him if he has fewer than 47 Hit Points," find out what their character is trying to specifically observe. If they don't have a clear answer for that, they need to adjust their action.

SEEK

The Seek action leaves it up to you how long a search should take. Use common sense. Most of the time, just trying to spot a creature hiding in a small area, or something else you could find with a simple Seek action rather than a long-term Search exploration activity, should default to a single action. The biggest distinction is whether something uses 3 actions or fewer—and can therefore be accomplished in a single turn—or requires more than that and can't be accomplished in an encounter at all. Consider whether it makes sense for the character to pull this off during the encounter or not, and whether that could be an interesting wrinkle in the story.

SENSE MOTIVE

When someone tries to Sense the Motive of an NPC, you'll need to figure out how to convey the information they receive. It's best to try to convey this indirectly, such as by describing a lying target's body language, odd word choices, sweating, or other details rather than saying, "They aren't behaving normally." However, sometimes dropping a punchy, "Oh, she is 100% lying about this!" on a critical success can be satisfying. You also might need to determine when the situation changes enough for someone to try to Sense Motive again. Usually, this means either the behavior

of the subject needs to change, or the person attempting the check needs to receive new evidence that something is out of the ordinary. If another PC tries to Sense Motive, gets different information about the target, and shares it, that doesn't really count as new information for a PC who tried previously. Rather, it's up to the players to roleplay out any changes in their thinking as a result.

TAKE COVER

You'll often need to determine whether someone can Take Cover. They usually just need a large enough object to hide behind. Imagine the character crouching, and picture whether the object could almost entirely cover up their silhouette. Taking Cover might also require them to Drop Prone, such as if they want to take cover under a table. Most of the time, you can let them combine this with the Take Cover action instead of using 2 separate actions.

MAPS AND MINIATURES

A grid and miniatures can make it easier to visualize combat for players and give a visual centerpiece for the players to focus on. Some advice for drawing maps appears on pages 52–53. A setup can range from a basic grid with some hasty marker lines and coins for miniatures to a full-color Flip-Mat with official prepainted minis or cardboard pawns, all the way to a set of 3-D dungeon terrain and hand-painted minis for each character. Many online tabletops have preset maps, token packs, and built-in functions for movement and line of sight. All these are fun to play on! Your setup should match your time commitment, budget, and the aesthetics you want.

You can also bring the setting alive by describing sensory details like sounds, smells, temperature, and 3-D elements that aren't represented on your map. Including the echoing ring of a sword striking a shield, an errant *ray of frost* freezing solid an apple in a bowl of fruit on the table, and the like makes the game feel more alive.

Placing miniatures on a grid can make it feel like you need to be exacting with the rules, but there's still room for improvisation! You might give another 5 feet of movement to someone running downhill if it will make their turn more dramatic. You're empowered to give players minor boosts that fit the story you want to tell, and to fill in nuances of the location beyond the elements covered in the *Core Rulebook*.

COVER

You determine whether a character has cover. The rules for drawing lines found in the *Core Rulebook* are useful in simple cases, but in more complicated situations, use your own discretion to make the call. Consider the details of the environment and 3-D space beyond what's on the battle mat. For instance, hanging banners might give cover, or a PC who has climbed onto a ledge might have a clear shot at an enemy standing behind a short wall. Be generous to PCs who use creativity to get into smart positions, especially if they spend valuable actions to move or Take Cover.

VARIANT RULES ON THE GRID

These two variants can change up how distance and movement work in your game.

UNIFORM DIAGONALS

If you like, your group can count all diagonals as 5 feet instead of counting every other diagonal as 10 feet. This speeds up play, but some people find it breaks their suspension of disbelief. This is most noticeable when someone moves a long distance along a diagonal all at once or when characters start moving diagonally as much as possible to cover more distance. Using this variant requires thinking of the game map in more abstract terms, and less like a real physical environment where the map is accurately reflecting the size of the room or encounter area. You can choose whether you measure radius-based areas of spells in the same way or visualize them as circles or other round shapes. The latter works best if you have templates to use.

HEX GRIDS

Some of the challenges of diagonal movement can be fixed by using a hex grid instead of a square grid, or by using a grid with offset squares, which works similarly. This allows you to count movement the same in all directions. However, it makes flanking a bit harder to pull off, requires you to arrange standard Large and larger miniatures differently, and causes challenges when drawing maps that consist primarily of rectangular structures, since you'll have a lot of partially occupied hexes.

SPLITTING AND COMBINING MOVEMENT

The different types of actions representing movement are split up for convenience of understanding how the rules work with a creature's actions. However, you can end up in odd situations, such as when a creature wants to jump vertically to get something and needs to move just a bit to get in range, then Leap, then continue moving. This can end up feeling like they're losing a lot of their movement to make this happen. At your discretion, you can allow the PCs to essentially combine these into one fluid movement as a 2-action activity: moving into range for a Leap, then Leaping, then using the rest of their Speed.

This typically works only for chaining types of movement together. Doing something like Interacting to open a door or making a Strike usually arrests movement long enough that doing so in the middle of movement isn't practical.

GOING GRIDLESS

As described on page 494 of the *Core Rulebook*, you can play encounters without a grid. This is best for groups who can easily imagine their surroundings without a visual aid, and for battles that don't require understanding a complex physical space. Your game doesn't have to be entirely on or entirely off maps—you might decide to play out most simple fights without a grid, then use one for highly

tactical fights or major set pieces. As noted in the *Core Rulebook*, the 3-action structure is your best friend. You might find yourself answering a lot of questions about actions and space, like "Can I get there this turn," or "How many of the gnolls can I catch in a *fireball*?" If you find yourself needing to repeatedly remind players of the physical features of the environment or enemy positioning, that might mean you're making your encounters too tactical for what a gridless game supports. This style works better to encourage imaginative, cinematic action and quick play without getting too hung up on details.

SPECIAL BATTLES AND MOVEMENT

The *Core Rulebook* covers the essential rules for mounted, aerial, and aquatic combat on page 478, but more complex battles can require specialized rules.

MOUNTED COMBAT

The logistics of mounted combat take some extra work. If you know one is coming up, make sure the fight takes place in a location with plenty of space to move, since you'll likely be dealing with multiple larger creatures. For a fight in which only one side has mounts, you might want an environment with a few areas too small for mounts, so the side on foot can get a tactical advantage there to offset the other side's greater mobility.

When the PCs are mounted, their enemies should focus most of their attacks on the PCs, not their mounts. Having foes target PCs' mounts too often gets really annoying, so have the enemies remember who the real threat is! When PCs fight mounted enemies, try to keep the mount's level fairly close to the PCs, rather than putting a 13th-level enemy on a 2nd-level war horse, use an 11th-level greater nightmare or something similar. This will fit better thematically and prevent the enemy from being dismounted too easily. If a mount is knocked out, the rider might be able to dismount without trouble if the mount was stationary, but if they were in motion, you should probably have the rider attempt a Reflex save. If they fail, the rider is thrown a short distance and falls prone. Setting a simple expert DC of 20 often works well for such checks.

Mounted combat on a grid is difficult for a running fight with both sides racing at full speed. For something like that, it can be better to no grid at all, though miniatures can still help for relative positioning and distances for ranged attacks. For such a race, consider using the chase subsystem instead (page 156).

DIFFERENT TYPES OF MOUNTS

The mount rules are for common cases: humanoids riding quadrupedal animals. However, you might allow someone to ride a beast or other type of creature by making a few adjustments. For an intelligent mount (such as a pegasus or unicorn), use the standard rules for mounted combat, but instead of attempting a check to Command an Animal, the



rider uses the same number of actions to ask the creature to do what they want. As the GM, you determine whether the creature does as requested and whether Diplomacy checks or the like are needed. It's recommended you disallow humanoid creatures and most other bipeds as mounts, especially if they are PCs. If you choose to allow this anyway, either the rider or mount should use at least one hand to hold onto the other, and both should spend an action on each of their turns to remain mounted.

AERIAL COMBAT

Determining positioning in the air can be tricky, and it's often best to be more relaxed with movement rules, flanking, and so forth than you would be on a flat grid. Note that battles can get more spread out with flight. If any creature is flying, it's important to establish the height of potential obstacles in the area early. This way, no one's surprised to suddenly find out the ceiling is lower than they thought or tall trees create a barrier. Be careful about using aerial combat before PCs have magic that lets them fly. Be especially careful with flying foes who use ranged attacks, because PCs might have few good tools to fight them.

The rules for flight say that a creature might need to attempt an Acrobatics check to Maneuver in Flight to pull off tricky maneuvers. You can generally use the same judgment you would for calling for Acrobatics checks when someone's moving on the ground. Trying to dive

through a narrow space, make a sharp turn, or the like might require checks, usually with a simple DC.

Falls can be deadly, and often happen when *fly* or a similar spell gets dispelled. This is part of the risk of flying! Flying enemies might keep closer to the ground to avoid this danger, or have the *feather fall* spell to prevent the damage or a *jade cat* talisman to reduce it.

AQUATIC COMBAT

The rules in the *Core Rulebook* are fairly generous to allow high-action battles underwater. Two significant challenges for non-aquatic creatures are breathing underwater (or holding their breath) and lacking a swim Speed. It's often best to save aquatic adventure until higher levels when PCs can get magical solutions for these problems, but you can instead give out such magic early, since it's not easy to exploit in land-based adventures the way flight magic can be. As with flight, dispelling can be deadly if someone relies on magic to breathe underwater. It's generally best to avoid having enemies who can breathe underwater dispel the water-breathing magic aiding PCs. Though PCs might be able to use *air bubble* and quickly cast *water breathing* again, having this happen repeatedly can be frustrating, and being forced to prepare an extremely high-level *water breathing* spell to avoid it isn't much fun either. Lacking a swim Speed is easier to deal with, except for characters with poor Athletics, who might need to strategize around

THREATS IN PUBLISHED ADVENTURES

When you reach an encounter in a published adventure, it will give you an indication of the expected party level and what threat the encounter is for that level of party, such as "moderate 3" for an encounter that's a moderate threat to a 3rd-level party. If your party reaches the encounter at a different level, you could recalculate the XP for each enemy individually, or you can estimate the threat posed by adjusting a step down or up per level difference. For example, the moderate 3 encounter would be severe 2, extreme 1, low 4, or trivial 5. If you still think the group can take it on as-is, you can use that estimation for determining XP, maybe giving a little extra if it ended up being tougher than you expected. Or, if you think it would be better, you can adapt the particulars of the encounter to be a more reasonable challenge to your party, usually by adjusting the number of monsters or using the elite and weak adjustments.

their shortcomings. The DC to Swim underwater shouldn't be very high—typically 15, or 13 in calm water.

When someone gets knocked out underwater, they usually float up or sink down. You decide based on their buoyancy; most adventurers carry a heavy enough load to sink.

When one group is in water and another outside it, note that the aquatic combat rules for attacks apply when *either* party is in water. You might judge that a character in the water is concealed against someone outside it due to distortion, and vice versa.

UNEXPECTED DIFFICULTY

What do you do when an encounter ends up being far more or less challenging than you anticipated? If the encounter is unlikely to kill all the characters, it might be best to roll with it, unless the fight is so frustrating that no one really wants to continue it. If it is likely to kill everyone, strongly consider ways to end the encounter differently. The villain might offer the PCs the chance to surrender, consider their task complete and leave, or use their advantage to get something else they want. If the worst does happen, suggestions for dealing with a total party kill can be found on page 30.

If a battle is too easy, it's often best to let the players enjoy their dominance. However, if you intended this to be a centerpiece battle, that might feel anticlimactic. Look for ways the enemy might escape or bring in reinforcements, but the PCs' success should still matter. Make sure the PCs feel the enemy's desperation—possibly have the enemy sacrifice something important to them to secure their escape.

In both these cases, consider whether the discrepancy from your expectations is due to luck. One side benefiting from extreme luck is to be expected from time to time. However, if the challenge comes down to a factor you had control over as a GM—like unfavorable terrain making things hard for the PCs or a monster with an overpowered ability—it's more likely you should make adjustments.

SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

Sometimes you'll want to run a social conflict in encounter mode. The basic guidelines on how to do so appear on page 494 of the *Core Rulebook*, and this section expands on them with additional advice and examples. Social encounters still require opposition—typically an adversary arguing against you, but sometimes institutional opposition or strongly held beliefs. It's important to note that some NPCs are much more adept at certain types of social encounters than at combat. You can find guidelines on creating such NPCs on pages 72–73, and some examples in the NPC Gallery chapter. The *Core Rulebook* suggests a few means of measuring success and progress in social encounters. If you want something more detailed, look at Victory Points on page 148 of this book, or the more specific rules for Influence on page 151.

As noted in the *Core Rulebook*, social encounters don't usually use 6-second rounds. The time scale you use can be flexible. Usually, you'll want a participant to go on just long enough to make one salient point and attempt one check before moving to the next character in the initiative order. Be flexible and encouraging as you run a social encounter, and don't worry about nitty-gritty details like character movement except in extreme cases. Allow the PCs to share information about as freely as the players can around the table. If one character is watching the opponent for signs they're lying, assume they can easily convey that to other characters subtly. It's good to remind players of things their characters might know or be likely to notice even if the players, in the moment, don't have them in mind. Describe NPCs' mental states and ask for clarification about the PCs' attitudes when needed. The following list describes various types of social encounters that PCs may find themselves in.

- Besting a rival bard in a battle of wits
- Brokering peace between warring groups
- Convincing a dragon not to eat the party
- Convincing a monarch to defend against an invasion
- Disproving a rival's scientific theories before an alchemists' guild assembly
- Ending a tense standoff
- Exposing a slippery villain's deception before a court of nobles
- Getting a desperate criminal to free a hostage
- Persuading a clan to trust their ancient rivals
- Petitioning for admittance to a magical academy
- Proving someone's innocence in front of a judge
- Securing a major contract over a rival
- Quelling an angry mob
- Swaying a fallen priest to return to the faith
- Tricking a charlatan into contradicting their past lies
- Turning a leader against their corrupted advisor
- Turning a low-ranking cultists against their leader
- Urging a lawmaker to grant clemency or a stay of execution
- Wining a debate about a contentious topic

RUNNING EXPLORATION

Exploration covers a wide variety of situations, letting the group's creativity and storytelling shine. You can also use it to control the pace of the game, guided by the number of interesting locations and phenomena in the area being explored and the level of detail you want to go into.

The *Core Rulebook* discusses running exploration mode starting on page 496 of that book, and this section supplements that information. If you want to run a session or adventure specifically focused on exploring and mapping uncharted wilds, consider using the hexploration subsystem on page 170. If you're looking for guidelines on managing initiative, see page 11 in the Running Encounters section.

As you run exploration, keep the following basic goals in mind. You'll find more advice on many of these points in the sections ahead.

- Evoke the setting with sensory details.
- Shift the passage of time to emphasize tension and uncertainty, and speed past uneventful intervals.
- Get players to add details by asking for their reactions.
- Present small-scale mysteries to intrigue players and spur investigation.
- When rolls are needed, look for ways to move the action forward or add interesting wrinkles on a failure.
- Plan effective transitions to encounters.

EVOCATIVE ENVIRONMENTS

As the PCs explore, convey their surroundings by appealing to the players' senses. This sets the scene, gives them a better sense of their environment, and can be used to foreshadow what they might find ahead. When determining which details to cover, think about what's familiar versus novel. A new dungeon might have similar architecture to previous ones but feature ancient structures that set it apart. You can use the PCs' familiarity as a tool to single out what's new. When preparing for a game, imagine yourself in the environment and jot down a few notes about what you would sense. Conveying these details keeps the players on the same page about what they sense, even if each character responds to it differently.

Keep in mind that the more you explain something, the more important it seems. This is valuable for you to drive interest, but can also be a mixed blessing, since describing something inconsequential to set the mood can lead players off on a tangent. Sometimes, the best solution is to find a way to make that unimportant thing as important as the players think it is!

FLOW OF TIME

As noted in the *Core Rulebook*, you rarely measure exploration down to the second or minute. If someone asks how long something takes, the nearest 10-minute increment typically does the job. (For long voyages, the

nearest hour might be more appropriate.) You convey the passage of time through your descriptions, but not just by addressing it outright. In a roleplaying game, information and time are linked. Time will seem to slow down the more detail you give. Think cinematically! A long voyage through a series of tunnels works well as a montage, whereas progress searching a statue for traps could be a relayed as a series of distressing details in quick succession, and would feel more tense due to that precision.

With that in mind, when is it best to speed up or slow down the passage of game time? Usually, you'll slow down and give more description when you're establishing something or progressing the story. When the PCs enter a dungeon or a new area, describe how it feels, slowing down to give the players a sense of what's ahead. When a PC stops to do something important or makes a key decision, and slowing down gives that moment its desired weight. You can also adjust the flow of time to reflect PCs' mental states. As a PC returns home after decades away, you might pause to ask the player what their PC is feeling, matching time to the rush of memories and emotions filling that PC's thoughts.

EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES

As described starting on page 479 of the *Core Rulebook*, PCs will undertake exploration activities while they explore. The purpose of these activities within the game is to clarify what a PC focuses on as they explore rather than being able to unrealistically do all things simultaneously. This adds variety within the group's behavior and can show you where players want the story to go. For example, a player whose PC is Investigating carvings on the walls shows you that the player wants those to be informative.

Exploration activities that happen continually as the group explores are meant to be narrative first and foremost, with the player describing to you what they're doing, and then you determining which an activity applies, plus any details or alterations for the situation. If a player says, "I'm Avoiding Notice," add more detail by asking what precautions they're taking or by telling them which passages they think are least guarded. Likewise, if a player says they're looking for traps *and* keeping their shield raised *and* covering the group's tracks, ask them which is most important to narrow down the activity. Consider the advantages and disadvantages of an activity given current circumstances. For instance, someone Scouting might encounter thin ice and fall through before their group can

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QUICK ENVIRONMENTAL DETAILS

AQUATIC

Sights choppy water, rolling waves, sunlight glinting, the curve of the horizon, driftwood

Sounds waves lapping against a ship, seabirds' cries, fluttering sails, creatures breaching the surface

Smells salt water, crisp fresh air, dead fish

Textures frigid water, slimy seaweed, crusty salt collecting on surfaces

Weather powerful winds, oncoming storms

ARCTIC

Sights blinding reflected sunlight, snowy plains, distant glaciers, deep crevasses, rocky cliffs, ice floes and bergs, animal tracks in snow

Sounds howling winds, drips of melting ice, utter quiet

Smells clean air, half-frozen bog, lichen, seaweed

Textures crunching snow, hard ice

Weather frigid gales, light snowfall, pounding blizzard

FOREST

Sights towering trees, dense undergrowth, verdant canopies, colorful wildlife, dappled sunlight through the trees, mossy tree trunks, twisted roots

Sounds rustling leaves, snapping branches, animal calls

Smells decomposing vegetation, flowering plants, pine trees, earthy mushrooms

Textures leaves crunching underfoot, scraping branches, water dripping from above, rough bark

Weather still air, cool shade, sporadic breeze, rain on the canopy, branches coated in thick snow

MOUNTAIN

Sights bare cliffs, snow caps, hardy trees, slopes littered with scree, fallen rocks, birds flying on currents, fog among the peaks

Sounds howling wind, falling rocks, clear echoes, crunch of

rocks underfoot, distant avalanche

Smells blowing dust, pine trees, fresh snow

Textures rough stone, powdery snow, unstable rubble

Weather swirling clouds, chill of high altitude, direct sunlight, powerful wind and rain

PLAINS

Sights grass waving gently, scattered wildflowers, rocky outcroppings or boulders, the curve of the horizon

Sounds rustling wind, birdsong, distant sounds carried far

Smells fresh air, earthy soil, distant carcasses

Textures touch of tall grass, rasp of scrub brush, crunch of dry dirt

Weather cooling of gentle wind, heat of direct sunlight, massive black thunderclouds

SWAMP

Sights lush leaves, clouds of gnats, algae-coated water, shacks on stilts, darting fish

Sounds croaking frogs, chirping insects, bubbling, splashing

Smells rich moss and algae, pungent swamp gases

Textures pushing through floating detritus, tangling creepers, thick mud

Weather oppressive humidity, still air, pouring rain, rays of sunlight

UNDERGROUND

Sights winding passages, sputtering yellow torchlight, uneven or cracked floors, ancient writings or architecture, stalagmites and stalactites

Sounds dripping condensation, scurrying rats or insects, distant clunks of machinery, tinny echoes of your voices and footsteps

Smells staleness of still air, sulfur, tang of metal deposits

Textures rough rock walls, erosion-smoothed stone, cobwebs

Weather chill of underground air, geothermal heat

reach them, or someone Investigating ancient hieroglyphs might critically fail and lead the party in the wrong direction. This does not apply for exploration activities that are discrete and occur when the group is taking a pause or zooming in on a particular action, such as Treat Wounds. Characters can always drop out of a continual exploration activity to perform a discrete one (even if they are fatigued and can't sustain an exploration activity as they travel), and they can change activities at any time.

The *Core Rulebook* covers how to adjudicate specific activities—Detect Magic, Follow the Expert, Investigate, and Search—on page 496.

MORE ON SEARCHING

The rules for Searching deliberately avoid giving intricate detail on how long a search takes. That's left in your hands because the circumstances of a search can vary widely.

If the group isn't in any danger and has time for a really thorough search, that's a good time to allow them to automatically succeed, rather than bothering to roll, or you might have them roll to see how long it takes before they find what they're looking for, ultimately finding it eventually no matter the result. Conversely, if they stop for a thorough search in the middle of a dungeon, that's a good time for their efforts to draw unwanted attention!

PCs might get to attempt another check if their initial search is a bust. But when do you allow them to try again? It's best to tie this to taking a different tactic. Just saying "I search it again" isn't enough, but if a PC tries a different method or has other tools at their disposal, it could work. Be generous with what you allow, as long as the player puts thought into it! If you know a search isn't going to turn up anything useful, make that clear early on so the group doesn't waste too much time on it. If they're determined to



keep going—which they often are—you might have them find something useful but minor in the search.

MORE ON FOLLOW THE EXPERT

Follow the Expert is a truly versatile activity that lets a PC who's lacking at a skill or exploration activity have a better chance to succeed. It's important that this doesn't become too rote. Let the players decide how one of them is helping out the other. The description can give you more to work with and add fun color to the exploration beyond just the mechanics. Also, if one PC helps another in the same way over and over, that could be a sign of the character being helped growing in a particular way. If the rogue has been helping the fighter Avoid Notice over and over, the fighter is essentially receiving training in Stealth at that point and might want to consider taking or retraining a skill increase to make that true. Connections like these can breathe life into the characters and their relationships, and it can help promote camaraderie and interactions between characters.

IMPROVISING NEW ACTIVITIES

The list of exploration activities isn't exhaustive. More appear in special subsystems and adventures, and you'll often need to create your own. When making your own, it's usually fine to just consider whether the amount of effort the PC has to put in is comparable to the other exploration activities and go from there. If you're having

trouble, try finding a comparable activity. For example, if the PC are Swimming as they explore, consider that travel speeds are based on the equivalent of 1 action per 6 seconds, and that other exploration activities the PCs can keep up without getting tired are generally based on alternating between 2 actions per 12 seconds, averaging to 1 action per 6 seconds. (Defend, for example, is based on using 1 action to Stride then 1 to Raise your Shield, which is why the PC moves at half Speed.) Hustle is a good example of an activity that can't be done indefinitely, so you can use it as a model for strenuous activities where the PCs are using the equivalent of 2 actions every 6 seconds.

When improvising an exploration activity, have in mind some advantages and disadvantages of that activity to inspire you. What else might the PC be neglecting while doing this activity? How does it interplay with activities the rest of the party uses? If the new activity seems like it's a better option than other activities all or nearly all the time, chances are you might want to adjust it so it's more balanced. Eventually, you'll start to find which exploration activities your group enjoys the most.

SCENES WITHIN EXPLORATION

It can help you to think of exploration as a series of scenes, with encounters not just breaking up exploration, but functioning as subsections within it. Many of these are



based on geography, for example, with exploring a series of dungeon corridors as one scene and entering the dungeon's great hall another. Other times, you'll break out of a scene at a point of interest. If the PCs decide to stop their travels and investigate a statue, think of that as a new scene.

This gives you a good point to describe the transition between scenes. Describe what was happening to reinforce where the group was, then describe what they now face to show the change. For example, "You've been making your way through this long hallway, but after a moment of debate, you stop, your footsteps and voices still echoing down the hall. The stone statue before you is seven feet high, adorned with rubies. It represents... maybe a god? Its face is damaged and broken. What do you do?"

When playing out a scene, your initial description should set the expectation of what level of detail the scene might go into, with you and the players adjusting as needed as you play. Also, it can be useful to go from PC to PC to avoid everybody talking at once. Start with someone who instigated the scene change, if possible, or perhaps the PC using the most relevant exploration activity, like a PC Investigating artwork or Searching for secrets in the example above.

HAZARDS

The task of looking for and disarming hazards comes up frequently in exploration and is an example of a type of

exploration scene. Hazards don't usually appear out of nowhere. A trap might be on a door's lock, at a specific bend in a corridor, or so on. You could have a pit trap in the middle of a large room, but a surprise that's entirely unexpected can be pretty unsatisfying. The same pit trap appearing in the middle of a 10-foot-wide, suspiciously featureless hallway can make the players say, "Okay, we should have seen that coming," with even that minimal amount of foreshadowing.

When a complex hazard triggers, move to encounter mode. Simple hazards are usually dealt with in exploration mode, but that doesn't mean they should be glossed over. Give a clear picture of what action by a PC set off the hazard, what happens as the hazard activates, and any aftereffects. PCs have many ways to heal themselves, so keep in mind that a damaging hazard won't always have a huge effect. They tend to work best if their activation might alert creatures in the area, lock the PCs out of an area, or cause a similar setback beyond just damage.

If a PC detects a hazard and wants to disable it, slow down a bit. Ask the player to describe what the PC is doing and give concrete details about how their efforts pan out to make it feel more real. It's good if the player sweats a little bit! It's supposed to be a tense situation, after all. If a hazard requires multiple checks to disable, it's good to describe what happens with each success to show incremental progress.

INVESTIGATIONS

The Investigate exploration activity is pretty broad and can lead into a more thorough investigation scene. Lead off with a definite clue that has details but clearly isn't the whole picture: "These runes look like ones used for arcane magic but are some kind of variant form," "As you assess the architecture of the room, you see the pillar caps are all made of granite, except for one that appears to be painted plaster," or "Each of the stained glass shows scenes of one of the god Norgorber's aspects, but there are only three windows, and Norgorber has four aspects."

Then, if this piques a player's interest, you can go into a more detailed investigation. They might look at the runes more closely, chip away at the plaster, or search around for a representation of Norgorber's fourth aspect. Avoid calling for checks if it's not necessary. In the last example, you'd likely tell them which of the deity's aspects is missing without another Religion check, and if the aspect is represented as a statue in the room, asking for a Perception check to find it might short-circuit the investigation in an uninteresting way.

To make the investigation feel real, it helps to talk the player through their character's thought processes by saying what clue inspired them to think of an important detail, explaining what the detail is, and possibly mentioning a further question that detail raises. Then let the player extrapolate rather than telling them their conclusion. Even if the investigation doesn't lead to an unambiguous conclusion, the players should feel they're more informed than when they started.

Though one person starts the investigation, getting others involved can help them become more interested and bring different skills to bear to get other types of information. Reward collaboration and clever ideas.

GETTING LOST

When PCs are exploring the wilderness or twisting dungeon corridors, they might get lost. This is most likely if they fail to Sense their Direction using Survival but can also happen based on the story, such as if they drop out of a portal in some strange land or come up from an underground passageway into a forest. Playing through the process of wandering in the wilderness and trying to find their way can be fun for a party, provided it's a fairly short interval. If a party is lost at the start of a session, they should usually have found their way and reached a significant destination by the end.

The Sense Direction activity uses Survival to find north. You can combine this with Recalling Knowledge about the area—typically using Nature or Society—for the PCs

to get their initial bearings. The DCs for these checks are normally trained or expert if the group is still fairly close to settlements or established nations but might be higher in deep wilderness. As the PCs try to find their way, think of ways to include notable landmarks they can seek out or stumble upon. Some of these might be useful, such as a great tree off in the distance they can climb to get a better vantage point or a mountain slope where multiple plumes of smoke billow up, indicating a settlement. Others might

be mysterious or dangerous, such as haunted glades or animal hunting grounds. When the PCs first look around or scout, pick two or three landmarks to point out.

Let the group decide on their course from there.

If the trek takes multiple days, you can move through each day pretty quickly.

You might need to have the group Subsist if they run out of food, and you might want to include some encounters if they're in a dangerous area. For these encounters, choose creatures that live in that type of environment. Remember that not all creatures attack on sight. Friendly or cautious creatures might approach, resulting in more interactive scenes that might even help the PCs.

If the PCs get unlucky or are just awful at Survival, you might end up stuck with no way for them to reorient themselves. In these cases, have someone come to them! They might get captured by local humanoids or monsters or stumble upon a dangerous location. They've figured out where they are, even if it's not where they wanted to be!

SURPRISE ATTACKS

Page 499 of the *Core Rulebook* covers the mechanics of how surprise attacks occur while PCs rest. Such surprise attacks should be used sparingly, even in dangerous areas. The fact that PCs are in a group scares away most animals and setting a watch can deter even more attackers. Surprise attacks are most likely if the PCs did something in advance that would lead to the ambush. For instance, they might be ambushed by bandits if they were flaunting their wealth or showing off expensive items earlier in the session, or they might be counterattacked by enemies if they attack the enemies first, only to retreat to rest. If the PCs set up camp hastily and decide not to set a watch, they might be in trouble if they're attacked. This should happen only in cases of extreme sloppiness, since if you take advantage of minor lapses, you might end up with a group that repeatedly spends an inordinate amount of time describing all their camping preparation to keep it from happening again. It's usually better to ask the PCs if they're setting up watches, rather than assume that their silence on the issue means they aren't.



RUNNING DOWNTIME

There's more to life than fighting monsters and looting treasure. What happens when a PC wins a deed to a tavern in a game of cards, crafts a magical item, builds a home, or pursues a relationship? All these goals and more are resolved by running downtime.

You can use downtime in a variety of ways that can streamline gameplay and flesh out the story, such as to:

- Demonstrate changes to the setting that result from the PCs' previous achievements, giving them time to breathe and appreciate what they've accomplished.
- Emphasize the PCs' planning and the fruit it bears.
- Avoid bogging the game down, even if a great deal of time passes. Keep the number of rolls small.
- Bring back compelling NPCs or plot threads established in previous downtime or adventures.
- Interject interesting events and scenes related to what the PCs do to make the world feel more alive.
- Switch to encounter or exploration more as needed when actions spur a new scene or adventure.

This section covers advice on how to fit downtime to suit your group. The amount and complexity can vary greatly depending on the game. You can find the basics of running downtime on page 500 of the *Core Rulebook*.

DEPTH OF DOWNTIME

Determine how involved your group wants downtime to be at the start of the game. If your players vary greatly in preference, you might need to find a middle ground, or some way to give the players least interested in downtime something they would find compelling. You can adjust downtime depth as the game goes along, and you might find it becomes more important to the players as their connection to the setting grows stronger.

Pay attention to the amount of real-world time you spend in downtime and the level of detail. Downtime should rarely last a whole session. Usually, a half hour between significant adventures is about right, and 15 minutes for shorter lulls in the action, such as when PCs return to a town briefly in the middle of an adventure. You can extend this as needed for more detailed roleplaying scenes.

For the level of detail, it's important to give more than just an overview, but often the basics will do. "A fleet of merchant ships arrives in the port, and an officer puts you to work unloading cargo" might do for using Sailing Lore to Earn Income, and "Your shipment of iron arrives late, but you're able to complete the armor" could be enough for Crafting. Go deeper if the player sets out to do something specific or asks questions you think have potential for an interesting story, but be careful with too much detail, as you run the risk of boring most of the table with minutiae.

GROUP ENGAGEMENT

One major challenge of downtime is keeping the whole group involved. When you can, combine multiple people's

tasks into one. For instance, if one PC wants to Earn Income with Performance and another wants to offer their services as a medic, you might say that a traveling caravan is stopping briefly, seeking entertainment and treatment for diseases and injuries their group suffered on the road. That means you can put both PCs in the same scene. You can also look for downtime activities that affect multiple characters' interests. For instance, if the rogue's contact at the thieves' guild wants a special magical cloak, a different PC might Craft that cloak. PCs can help each other more directly. For instance, if the barbarian's player doesn't plan to do anything in downtime, you might let the barbarian Aid another character in crafting weapons—feeding the forge and working the bellows, for instance.

If a player really isn't interested in downtime, they might not want to engage at all. In that case, it's best to shorten the time you spend on downtime and give their actions a one-sentence description. If other players want a deeper downtime experience, consider extending game sessions or running side sessions for just those players.

CAMPAIGNS WITHOUT DOWNTIME

There are two ways you might end up with a game that has no downtime: no time and no interest. In the first, the story moves along so quickly that the PCs don't really have time to engage with downtime. Think of it like a breakneck action movie, where the characters barely have time to breathe before they're on to the next challenge, and even the end of an adventure is a cliffhanger.

In the second, you and the other players just don't care about downtime at all. It doesn't interest you. In this case, just summarize what happens between adventures and skip using any downtime rules.

If you skip downtime, you might not need to adjust your game. The money PCs can earn during downtime is minor compared to what they can gain through adventures. However, the PCs will have less choice in what items they get if they don't Craft or earn extra money to buy items.

LONG-TERM GOALS

Downtime's more satisfying when the PCs work toward long-term goals rather than perform disconnected tasks. You can ask players what their PCs' goals are, and also look for storylines they're interested in that you can use as seeds for long-term goals. Long-term goals might include running a business, creating a guild, establishing an arcane school, returning a despoiled land to its natural splendor, reforming local politics, or rebuilding a ruin.



Goals involving organizations are a good opportunity to use the leadership subsystem on page 168. If players don't have clear ideas for their goals, look at their backgrounds, NPCs they know, and things they've expressed interest in during adventures to develop some suggestions. Remember that you're not trying to get them to accept your exact suggestions, but to pick a goal they really like.

Long-term goals should shape the game, and reinforcing their progress is key. Show changes, good and bad, that result from the PCs' efforts, both in downtime and on their adventures if applicable. This doesn't have to be subtle! You can directly say, "You've been trying to get the magistrate to allow you to buy this plot of land, but the fact that you entered the wizard's tower illegally seems to have soured him toward you."

Think ahead in stages. For instance, if a PC wants to run a business, you might have them...

- Start with a simple stand to sell their wares.
- Show they're drawing big crowds and need to expand.
- Build a storefront.
- Open to modest success.
- Get a small but loyal following.
- Hire employees to keep up with demand.
- Deal with supply issues or competition.
- Get enough interest in a nearby settlement that they might want to expand their business.

And so on. You can deliver each of these details through

a little vignette. For example, if you use the second bullet point, you might describe the throng of people crowded around the PCs' stand, and say they sold out of goods before half the people were served. Downtime goals are a great way to weave the PCs' agency into the story.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE

Success at a reasonable long-term goal should be likely, but not guaranteed. Give the player an expectation of how likely their goal is to work out based on how ambitious it is. Be clear about how much downtime it will take compared to the amount of downtime you expect the party will get during your campaign. Then let the player decide how to commit their downtime, and to which tasks.

Repeated failures or outside problems could lead to the whole goal failing. It happens! But give the player a fair chance. Even if their goal is really hard to achieve—like driving the undead out of Ustalav—they might find a way. Don't undermine their efforts or ideas, but do make clear the magnitude of the task they've chosen. Remember that even if a goal fails, the effort was worthwhile.

A failure or a success at a long-term goal can be a major emotional beat for the character. They've changed the world, after all! Don't shortchange it just because it happened in downtime. In fact, because it might have taken place over multiple sessions, the player might have been looking forward to the results for a really long time!



BUYING AND SELLING

The game leaves it up to you to determine what items the PCs can and can't purchase, and the final market Price for them. Settlements the size of a town or bigger typically have at least one vendor for basic, common gear, and even magic and alchemical items of 1st level. Beyond that, it all depends on how much you want to allow the players to determine their abilities and how much verisimilitude you want in your game. You can set the specifics where you need, but let's look at three possibilities.

PCs can buy what they want where they want. You gloss over the details of markets. PCs can sell whatever they want for half the Price and buy any item to which they have access at full Price. This approach is focused on expediency over verisimilitude and is likely to reduce the number of unusual or distinctive items the PCs have, as many players seek out the ones that most directly support their characters' strengths. This still means there's a limit on purchasing uncommon or rarer items, but you could even do away with rarity if your group wants, or add a surcharge instead (depending on your group's play style, that could be anywhere from 10% to 100% for uncommon items, and 25% to 500% if you also want to open up all rare items).

PCs can buy what they want but must put in additional effort. If they want to sell or buy items, PCs must be in a location where the markets can support that. They can

usually sell a single item for half its Price, but the Price for something already plentiful on the market could drop lower, typically to 25% or 10%, or be refused entirely if there's a glut. Buying an item usually costs the full Price; buying higher-level items (or uncommon items if they're available at all) requires seeking out a special vendor or NPC and can take extra time, representing a real investment by the PCs. They might be unable to find the item at all even after their time investment, based on the settlement's parameters. This approach allows PCs to determine some of their items, but forces them to really work to get more powerful items and discourages looting every enemy to sell off fairly ordinary armor. This can be the most work for you but can make the world feel diverse and complex.

Magical markets are rare or nonexistent. PCs get what they find in adventures and can Craft their own items, if you allow them to get formulas in some way. If you have magical marketplaces at all, their selections are small. They sell items at full Price and have difficulty attaining the funds to buy more items. They might purchase items for half of the Price but are far more selective about what they take. If you use this approach, PCs are far more likely to use strange items they find but might be dissatisfied or even underpowered depending on what items you give them. Even in this style of game, you might want to allow them to get weapons and armor with fundamental runes fairly easily, or make sure you award those on a regular basis.

TASKS AND EVENTS

Players will often look to you for tasks they might take on during downtime, especially if they're looking to Earn Income. You should also interject special events to surprise your players and add interesting scenes. If you need some quick ideas for tasks characters might offer a PC, look at the tables below for inspiration. The Earn Income tasks are arranged with tasks appropriate for low-level PCs first, but most can be adapted to the level you need. For the events, you might need to "zoom out" to focus on a special scene or even a short encounter or adventure.

TABLE 1-1: EARN INCOME TASKS

Academia, Library, Other Educational Lore
Work at a school or library
Compile information on a distant land for an expedition
Serve as administrator for a school or library
Acquire a rare book on dragons for a local noble
Crafting
Make tools for local farmers
Brew a crate of healing potions for a local church or hospital
Sew a dress for a noble's debutante ball
Supply magical weapons for the palace guard corps
Engineering Lore
Assess the fortifications built to protect a town
Plan the mechanism for a drawbridge
Create schematics for a new mill
Food or Drink Lore
Brew simple ale or cook an ordinary dish for the local inn
Identify a dozen bottles of wine
Create a showpiece dish for an upcoming festival
Create a nine-course meal for a noble banquet
Genealogy Lore
Compile a family tree for a minor noble family
Determine next of kin to settle an inheritance dispute
Map the web of intermarriages of a sprawling royal family
Determine the lineages of an ancient civilization
Trace the lost heir of an ancient empire
Guild Lore
Recruit initiates for a guild
Identify symbols of an ancient guild in a tome
Consult on rearranging a guild's hierarchy
Oversee the merger of two guilds or one guild splitting into two
Herbalism Lore
Supply poultices to a physician
Prepare herbs for a small restaurant
Identify the poisonous plant eaten by a local lord
Legal Lore
Clear some minor red tape
Defend someone charged with theft
Bring a corrupt noble to justice through the legal system
Find loopholes in a contract made with a devil
Mercantile Lore
Price a crate of imported textiles
Find the best trade route for a pirate crew to raid
Set exchange rates for a trade consortium

Mining Lore

Work a shift in a coal mine
Determine where a raw ingot was mined
Prospect to find a site for a new mine

Performance

Busk for townsfolk at a street fair
Play in the orchestra at an opera
Attend a society figure's salon
Perform for visiting nobles
Impress a visiting maestro to bring glory to your hometown
Put on a performance for a patron from another plane

Politics Lore

Lobby for a vote or decision to go a certain way
Smear a noble to lower their station

Sailing Lore

Crew a ship on a short voyage
Render a ship in dry-dock seaworthy
Pilot a ship through monster-infested waters

Underworld Lore

Find out where a stolen item ended up
Get someone an audience with the head of a thieves' guild
Smuggle a shipment of valuables out of the city

Warfare Lore

Teach a spear fighting class at a dojo
Instruct an officer in various military stratagems
Advise a general in planning a battlefield offensive

TABLE 1-2: DOWNTIME EVENTS

Craft or Earn Income (Crafting)
A shipment of important materials is delayed, and the PC must find out why.
The PC creates a superlative work, which draws the attention of a collector or museum.
The PC discovers a more efficient technique to work a material and must decide to share it or keep it secret.
Create a Forgery (Society)
The format for paperwork the PC is attempting to mimic gets changed, and they must adjust.
The paperwork is spoiled by a freak accident, such as a leaky roof above the workshop or a clumsy assistant knocking over beakers of chemicals.
A mysterious benefactor provides the PC with special tools or a source document they didn't have, but suggests they'll ask for a favor later to reciprocate.
Earn Income (General)
A fussy client demands multiple rounds of changes throughout the process.
An accident at a work site puts someone in danger.
Something the PC is working on becomes a fad or hit—demand skyrockets!
A visitor is impressed with the PC's work and offers them a more lucrative task in a distant location.
Conditions on the job site are abysmal, and other workers ask the PC to join them in confronting the bosses.
The bosses or guildmasters are doing something illegal and attempt to bribe the PC to look the other way.

The PC returns to their work one day to find someone has tampered with what they've done.

Earn Income (Performance)

Due to the performance's success, more shows are added, running the PC ragged.

A competing show across town draws away customers.

A powerful noble finances a special performance but demands some changes to the contents.

One of the PC's fellow performers doesn't show up, but the show must go on!

Subsist (Survival)

Over a long time subsisting in a single area, the PC finds an unknown berry or herb that could be useful for making a new medicine.

The PC finds signs indicating some large creature has been foraging as well—possibly a monster.

Buy and Sell Items

The PC sells an item of interest to members of a particular group, who pursue the PC.

A merchant sells the PC a fraudulent item.

A shop the PCs frequent is in trouble and about to go out of business without help.

Someone else offers a higher bid for an item a PC wants, resulting in a negotiation or in the NPC offering a job the PC must perform to claim the item.

Retrain

The PC sustains an injury in physical training.

Tapping into new magical powers inflicts a magical curse or creates an odd phenomenon.

A retraining instructor falls ill or goes missing.

Someone witnesses the PC retraining and asks to join them as they study or practice.

The PC's training comes to a halt, and they need to acquire a rare book or something similar to continue.

MONEY IN DOWNTIME

While the amount of money the PCs can earn during short periods of downtime is significantly less than the value of the loot they gain adventuring, it can still serve as a satisfying bonus. The PCs might use their money to outfit themselves better, donate it toward a good cause, or pool it together to save for a major purchase. If you find that a PC tends to forget about their money or save it up more cautiously than they really need to, offer them rewarding opportunities to spend it. For instance, they might be approached to contribute to a charity in desperate need or sponsor an artist looking for a patron.

The downtime system includes a guide for calculating the cost of living, using the values found in the *Core Rulebook* on page 294. Tracking cost of living is usually best reserved for months or years of downtime since that's when someone might earn a substantial amount of money from downtime activities and find that costs really add up. You can usually ignore it if there are only a few days of downtime, though if a PC is roleplaying a fine or extravagant lifestyle, you might charge them

during even short periods of downtime to reinforce the story they're telling.

INVESTMENTS

The downtime system isn't meant to deal with investing money, receiving interest, or the like just to make more money. Rather, investing should result in changes in the world. PCs might invest in founding a museum, and find on their return that the collection has grown. If they fund an expedition, they might get access to interesting trade goods later on.

When characters are investing in a major endeavor, the amount of in-world time invested often matters more than the money. While spending additional money greatly increases the efficiency of Crafting an item, you can't build a fort in a day just because you have enough money to pay for the whole process. Downtime is a good opportunity for characters to start long processes that can continue in the background as the PCs adventure, provided they can find a trustworthy, competent person to run things in their stead.

MONEY DURING LONG PERIODS OF DOWNTIME

If the PCs have a very long time between adventures, especially years, they have the opportunity to collect a great deal of money through downtime. Use the guidelines for average progress and cost of living on pages 501–502 of the *Core Rulebook* to figure out how much they get. Because you're trying to convey that a long time has passed, have them spend it before you jump to the end of downtime. What did they invest in during those years? What drew their interest? Did their fortunes rise or fall? Did they acquire interesting objects or hire compelling people? Consider this expenditure another way to show how the PCs impact the world.

RETRAINING

The rules and suggestions for retraining are covered thoroughly in the *Core Rulebook* on page 502. Your primary responsibility here is to determine the time, instruction, and costs of retraining, as well as adjusting details to align cohesively with the story and world. Consider what effort each PC puts forth as they retrain, so you can describe how they feel their abilities change. What kind of research and practice do they do? If they have a teacher, what advice does that teacher give?

You can run a campaign without retraining if you want the PCs to be more bound by their decisions or are running a game without downtime. However, if your campaign doesn't use downtime rules but a player really regrets a decision made while building or leveling up their character, you might make an exception for them.

TEACHERS

Most of the abilities PCs gain come through adventuring. They're learning on the job! Retraining, on the other

hand, is dedicated study that might require a teacher's help. You don't have to use teachers, but it gives you a great way to introduce a new NPC or bring back an existing one in a new role. The role of a teacher could also be filled by communing with nature for a druid, poring through a massive grimoire for a wizard, and so on. The important part is the guidance gained from that source. The following list includes sample teachers.

- Archwizard Koda Mohanz, wizard academy proctor
- Bagra Redforge, aged artisan
- Baroness Ivestia II, tutor in etiquette and social maneuvering
- Byren Effestos, Esquire, advisor in matters of law, politics, and finance
- Dr. Phinella Albor, professor of medicine and surgery
- Dr. Revis Enzerrad, mystic versed in the occult
- Grita the Swamp Sage, purveyor of strange draughts and cryptic riddles
- Jeballewn Leastfire, tutor in alchemical experimentation
- Kpunde Neverlost, retired veteran adventurer
- Lyra, teller of legends and master of handicrafts
- Major Venaesus, instructor of military tactics
- Mother Elizia, high priest and religious scholar
- Professor Kurid Yamarrupan, senior university lector
- Quintari Solvar, coach for fitness and healthy living
- Ragged Sanden, hermit and speaker for nature
- Silent Flame, Master of the Seventeen Forms
- Tembly the Daring, veteran acrobat and circus performer
- Twelve Fingers, experienced thief and spy
- Wen Hardfoot, well-traveled scout and naturalist
- Zuleri Gan, conductor, playwright, and music scholar

EXTREME RETRAINING

By the default rules, PCs can't retrain their class, ancestry, background, ability boosts, or anything else intrinsic to their character. However, you might be able to find a way to make this happen in the story, going beyond the realm of retraining and into deeper, story-based quests. Class and ability modifiers are the simplest of these to justify, as they could come about solely through intense retraining. Especially at low levels, you might let a player rebuild their character as a different class, perhaps starting by retraining into a multiclass dedication for their new class and swapping into more feats from that dedication as partial progress towards the class change. Just be mindful that they aren't swapping over to switch out a class they think is great at low levels for one they think is stronger at high levels. Retraining a class or ability scores should take a long time, typically months or years.

Changing an ancestry or heritage requires some kind of magic, such as reincarnation into a new form. This might take a complex ritual, exposure to bizarre and

rare magic, or the intervention of a deity. For instance, you might require an elf who wants to be a halfling to first become trained in Halfling Lore, worship the halfling pantheon, and eventually do a great service for halflings to get a divine blessing of transformation.

Retraining a background requires altering the game's story so that the events the PC thought happened didn't. That can be pretty tricky to justify! The most likely scenario is that they had their memory altered and need to get it magically restored to reveal their "true" background—the new retrained background.

Of course, in all these cases you could make an exception and just let the player make the change without explanation. This effectively acknowledges that you're playing a game, and don't need an in-world justification for certain changes. For some groups it might be easier, or require less suspension of disbelief, to ask the group to adjust their ideas of what's previously happened in the game than to accept something like an elf turning into a halfling via magic.



ADJUDICATING RULES

As Game Master, it falls on you to adjudicate the rules. This means you're making judgments and decisions about the rules, especially when their application is unclear. Roleplaying games encourage creativity, and however well crafted and well tested a set of rules is, players will always find situations that require interpretation and judgment by the GM.

You need at least some familiarity with the rules to run a game well. But you don't need to be the foremost expert on the rules. You don't even need to know the most about the rules at your table to be a great GM! There's a key difference between "knowing" the rules and "adjudicating" the rules.

While GMing, strive to make quick, fair, and consistent rulings. Your rulings should encourage your group to work together to interpret the rules and to be creative with their characters' decisions and actions. If your group is satisfied with the interpretation, you've made the right adjudication!

CORE PRINCIPLES

These are the most important things to keep in mind.

- Remember the basics of the rules.
- Be consistent with your past rulings.
- Don't worry if you don't have a specific rule memorized; it's OK to look it up!
- Listen to concise opinions from the other players.
- Make a call and get on with play.
- Review your decision after the session is over, if necessary.

THE BASICS

Start by looking at the basic guidelines on page 491 of the *Core Rulebook* for the fundamental principles that can help you make rulings quickly and fairly. You should also be familiar with the rules relevant to encounters, exploration, and downtime, as well as with the section in Chapter 10: Game Mastering in the *Core Rulebook* on running those modes of play.

CONSISTENCY AND FAIRNESS

As an arbiter of the rules and the person who's setting the scene for the action, it's in your best interest to appear fair at all times. Your main defense against appearing unfair is consistency in your rulings.

Achieving consistency is as easy as explaining why you're ruling a certain way and comparing this ruling to past rulings you've made in a way that makes sense to

your players. For example, you might say something like "When Torben swung from the chandelier and attacked the air elemental, I required an Athletics check as part of the action and gave a +1 circumstance bonus to the attack roll. Hanging from the rope bridge to attack the giant bat sounds similar, so why don't you roll an Athletics check." Do this any time it's applicable when you make a ruling, but don't feel compelled to do so for truly new rulings.

Through the course of playing, your previous rulings will form a set of shared preferences and an understanding between you and your group—or even become formalized house rules. Over time, your players will think about these examples when planning their actions, which can improve consistency during play.

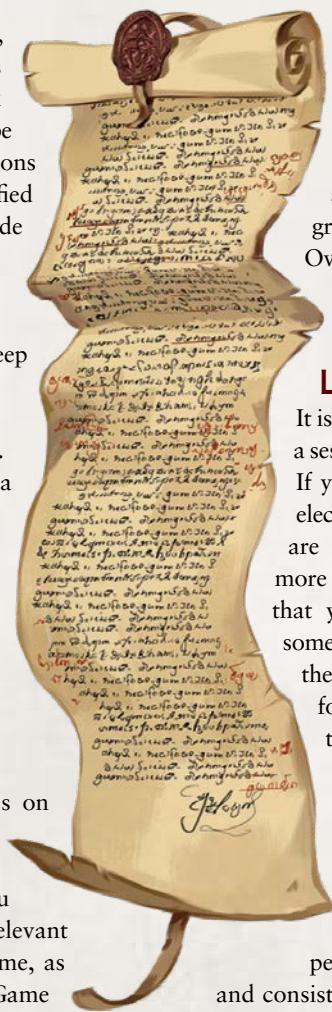
LOOKING UP RULES

It is perfectly acceptable to refer to the rules during a session. However, you don't have to do this alone. If you're leafing through a book or searching an electronic reference, your players are idle. There are a few techniques that make these intervals more palatable for the players. Letting them know that you're looking something up might prompt some players to also read the rule. This can increase the chances of collaboration and sets expectations for the length of the pause. Alerting your players that you're going to take a minute and read the rules also lets them know that it's a good time to tend to away-from-the-table tasks like refilling a drink.

LISTEN TO THE PLAYERS

The friends around your game table are perhaps your best tool for achieving quick, fair, and consistent rulings. Sharing the task of remembering the rules makes rules discussions collaborative rather than combative, greatly increases the chances of accurate and comprehensive recall of the written rules and your own past rulings, and is true to the shared storytelling spirit of Pathfinder.

Asking if anyone knows how a specific rule rewards those players who have spent time mastering the rules and involves more people in the discussion. It signals to other players that you are willing to hear opinions before making a ruling, and it builds a more collaborative environment. In addition, for groups with access to a large number



of sourcebooks or rules resources, you can ask different players to examine separate sources. This can greatly increase the speed and accuracy of a group's rulings.

Approaching the rules as a group problem also means that you should never trivialize player concerns about a rule. You must also think about each player and assess how important the rules actually are to each player. Remember, though—while rules recall is a group challenge, making the final decision on the rules interpretation and getting the session moving again falls to you.

MAKE THE CALL

Though all the above are great practices for making good rulings, often the best ruling is the one that keeps the game moving. Avoid getting so bogged down that it takes you several minutes to decide what ruling you'll proceed with. Take what's close enough and keep playing. If necessary, you can tell your group "This is how we're playing it now, but we can have more discussion between sessions." This gets you back in the action, puts a clear stamp on the fact that this is your decision in the moment, and empowers your players with permission to express their opinions on the ruling at a later time. When in doubt, rule in favor of the player's request, and then review the situation later.

The best time to really go in-depth, possibly putting the group on a short break, is when a situation is life-or-death or has major consequences in a character's story.

TAKE TIME FOR REVIEW

When you make a decision you're not sure about, look back over it at the end of a session or between sessions. You might change your mind—there's nothing wrong with that! If you change or clarify your original ruling, inform your players before the next session. No one likes being surprised by a rule change. Even better, include them in a rules conversation just like you might during a session. The guidance on discussing rules with your players still applies between sessions. Unlike at-the-table rules discussions, there's also much more time in these situations to read existing official rulings or sources.

SAYING "YES, BUT"

Some of the most memorable moments come from situations that inherently call for a rules interpretation, like when a player wants to do something creative using the environment. The variety of these situations is limited only by the imagination of your players. It's usually better to say "yes" than "no," within reason. For example, imagine a player wants to do something borderline nonsensical like grabbing a spider and squeezing it to force it to use its web attack. But what about a player who wants to use a fire spell to deliberately ignite a barrel of oil? Surely that should have some effect!

This is where you can use a variant of the well-known improv "Yes, and," technique: you can say "Yes, but."

With "Yes, but," you allow the player's creative idea, but tie it into the world and the game rules via some sort of additional consequences, potentially adding the uncertainty of an additional roll.

Here are some simple ways you might implement this tool. Almost all of these require an action or are part of another action.

- Get a fleeting benefit without a roll. Example: dip a sword into a burning brazier to add 1 fire damage on the next attack against a troll.
- Require a check, then apply a circumstance bonus to the PC's action. Example: swing from a chandelier above a foe.
- Require a check, then apply a circumstance penalty or condition to a foe. Example: throw a barrel over a monster's head.
- Require an attack roll or skill check to deal minor damage and gain another benefit. Examples: jump from a higher elevation down onto a foe for a small amount of damage, potentially knocking the foe prone; throw sand in an opponent's eyes.
- Require a directed attack against an object, then allow foes to attempt saving throws against the object's effect at a DC you choose. Example: cast a *produce flame* spell at a barrel of explosives.

Another powerful tool you can use to help you say "Yes, but" when you're unsure of the game impact is to allow the idea to work just this once, letting your players know that this is part of your decision. For instance, maybe you think a PCs attempt to Grapple a spider to aim its web attack at another foe is so fun you have to let them do it, but you're worried that the effect would be so powerful that the PCs would just carry around a spider to shoot webs for the rest of the campaign. By making it a one-time effect, you can have fun but don't have to worry about whether you're setting a disruptive precedent for later on.

HOUSE RULES

You and your players will inevitably come across a rule you disagree with, or that runs counter to the theme of your game. You might even decide to add a specific rule to an area not covered by the written rules. Collectively, these rulings, changes, and additions are known as house rules. It's a good idea to record them in a place where the group can easily access and refer to them, and where a potential new player could find them. Such record-keeping is a great thing to delegate to a player!

The best rule of thumb in these situations is to be slow to change the written rules and quick to revert a problematic ruling or house rule. The simple reason for this is that sticking to the written rules is the easiest way to remain fair and consistent. However, the more you learn your group's play style, the more often you'll find times where you and your group feel it's correct to institute a house rule of some sort. You might take a look at Chapter 4: Variant Rules to get started!

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RESOLVING PROBLEMS

Being a Game Master and running a game can be a tremendously rewarding and fulfilling experience: you get to sit down with friends old and new, roll some dice, tell stories, and have fun. That said, being a GM and running a game can present unique challenges. Sometimes problems present themselves at the table, and it's up to the GM to resolve them.

When dealing with problems at the table, keep in mind the primary reason to play Pathfinder is to have fun. And that's true for everyone—player or GM. Don't "solve" a problem by reducing everyone's enjoyment of the game or their ability to forge a path for their characters. Of course, sometimes your solution might not make everyone deliriously happy. Play style is a highly personal, individual

thing, rarely does a group agree on all things all the time. Solving problems can be as collaborative as the rest of the game. Only a foolish GM ignores the players' opinions—but that said, the final decision in resolving a problem rests with you.

Issues at the table arise occasionally. Broadly, such problems can be separated into four main categories: distractions, total party kills, problematic players, and power imbalances. The first of these is covered in detail on page 491 of the *Core Rulebook*, and guidance for the others appears here.

TOTAL PARTY KILLS

Perhaps the most feared of any outcome of a gaming session, a total party kill (TPK) can spell the end of an adventure or campaign. In a TPK, every member of the party dies. Think in advance about how comfortable you are with TPKs and discuss them with the other players. This can provide valuable insights into not only how you should handle one but also the implied level of lethality the players expect.

TPKs are rarely unavoidable. Usually it becomes evident at some point during the session, whether to everyone or only to you, that disaster looms. What the players do with this insight is up to them, but you have more control and can take steps to avoid the TPK. For example, perhaps the PCs' foe gets distracted by something, an ally arrives to help the heroes, or the villain captures them instead of slaying them outright. The simplest path is to just allow a clear escape route the PCs can take—perhaps with a few characters still falling along the way. It's not entirely your responsibility to defuse the TPK, but offering such opportunities gives players more say in their characters' fates.

Should a TPK occur anyway, the kind of game you're running should influence your approach to the situation. For example, in a campaign centered around dungeon crawling, a TPK is less of a problem—the players simply form a new adventuring party and take up where the dead ones left off. If you are running a story-intensive game in which each PC has a personal stake in defeating the villain, saving the town, or the like, a TPK could demolish multiple plot threads. Here, you might use the story you have in place, having the NPCs take up arms to find or avenge the slain group—or raise them from the dead.

Note that the game should continue only if the players want it to. The premature end of an adventure or campaign



isn't always a bad thing. If the group is interested in moving on, there's nothing wrong with ending the campaign and starting something different.

PROBLEMATIC PLAYERS

Most players who cause problems do so unintentionally—perhaps bringing out-of-game issues and stresses to the table. You shouldn't immediately jump on every instance of problematic play—everyone has a bad night on occasion. However, if someone disrupts the game on an ongoing basis, you owe it to all the players to deal with the problem. If you don't, bad feelings, grudges, and even ruined friendships could result.

Handling a problematic player requires tact: making demands in front of the rest of the group is rarely the best way to resolve the problem. Attempt to handle the problem privately away from the game, or call a break to have a private conversation if the situation is really urgent. As with all emotionally charged conversations, email, text messages and the like can lose the subtlety of speech—it's better to meet the player face to face, if possible.

Here are some problematic behaviors that often come up and might require you to intervene.

- Obsessing over the letter of the rules.
- Constantly “helping” other players make the optimal choice on their turn.
- Making their character the center of attention, without allowing space for other players.

Other behaviors are unacceptable and must be dealt with firmly and decisively. These can be severe enough to pause the game in progress. Such actions speak to a deeper problem and require more drastic action to solve.

- Repeatedly arguing with decisions made by other players or the GM.
- Ignoring other players' opinions.
- Deliberately derailing the adventure's plot.
- Being deliberately rude or cruel to other players—especially if it's on the basis of their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, political or religious affiliation, the color of their skin, or the like.

SAFETY TOOLS

Introducing and using safety tools at your table can help head off some problematic behaviors. The X-Card and Lines and Veils tools described on page 485 of the *Core Rulebook* allow anyone who feels uncomfortable or unsafe to express their discomfort, with clear guidance on how the rest of the table should respond. This clarity sets obvious boundaries to help enforce the social rules of the table.

EJECTING A PLAYER

Ultimately, there is no place for a serially or deliberately disruptive player in your gaming group. Such behavior is not fair to you or the other players, and the problem player needs to either modify their behavior or leave the group.

CHEATING

Players rarely cheat knowingly, so if you suspect a player of cheating, it's safe to assume first that they're unaware of—or simply forgot—how an aspect of the rules works. A gentle reminder of how the rule, spell, or ability in question functions is usually enough to move past the situation. Every once in a great while, you'll encounter a player who is deliberately cheating. The spirit of roleplaying is one of cooperative storytelling and overcoming challenges together, so one player cheating steals fun from every other player at the table. It's natural to feel some anger in this situation, so make sure you let some time pass between when you discover that a player is cheating and when you address it with them.

Ultimately, it will fall to you as the GM to gently make it clear that this behavior must stop. To do this well, think carefully about why the player is cheating before approaching them. The reason behind the cheating often points to a reasonable solution. When discussing the matter with your player, do your best to remain calm and inquisitive rather than accusatory.

Before meeting with the problem player, discuss the situation with the other players in private to ensure you make the right call, and figure out what repercussions you expect and whether the game should continue at all.

When you break the news to the problem player, be compassionate but firmly state the decision is final and restate which behaviors are responsible. If parts of having the player in the game were rewarding or you want the player to remain a friend, make that clear and decide if a player's behavior merits other changes to your relationship.

POWER IMBALANCES

You might end up with one PC who outshines everyone else. Perhaps the player is a rules expert with a powerful character, other players are less experienced or more focused on the story of their characters, or there's just a rules combination or item that's stronger than you expected. In any case, this imbalance might mean you have other players who feel ineffective, or the overpowered character's player becomes bored because they aren't challenged during gameplay.

Talk to the player between sessions, and make it clear that no one at the table is to blame in this situation. Most players have no problem making some concessions for the happiness of the group. If the problem results from rules options, offer an easy way to retrain. If the imbalance resulted from an item, come up with a way that item might need to be lost or sacrificed, but in a satisfying way that furthers the narrative.

If you meet resistance from the player, listen to their counterpoints. If you're still convinced they need to change, you might need to be more firm.

It's worth stating that players might still have fun, or even enjoy an instance of power imbalance. You don't have to do anything to address it unless it limits fun at your table.

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NARRATIVE COLLABORATION

The relationship between you, your players, and the story is what makes roleplaying games successful and memorable. If all the players at the table contribute ideas, the game holds more surprises for everyone—including you!

While some players like to sit back and let the Game Master control everything, most players want their contributions to shape the campaign's story. This is central to the concept of player agency—making players feel like the choices they make really matter, and that the world is a living place they can change through their decisions. In some games, the players can step beyond the traditional divide between GM and players to directly influence how the story progresses. Below are three methods you can use to balance the narrative control of your game.

IDEA FARM

Coming up with ideas for a campaign can sometimes feel overwhelming. This is where your players come in handy! You can solicit direct feedback from them and implement their ideas into the game. This style of narrative control preserve your authority over the game while giving players the chance to incorporate elements into the game you know they want to see. It doesn't venture beyond the traditional structure of a fantasy roleplaying game.

Plan for a few checkpoints throughout the campaign where you touch base with your players to get their ideas. The most crucial comes at the start of the game. It's best to take this step before you even set to work on crafting the world or plot, so that player input can define what's important in the game world. Later, checkpoints can coincide with major story milestones. For example, if the players set off across the sea, you might ask where they want their voyage to end and what sites, if any, they'd like to explore along the way.

CREATIVE COLLABORATION

You might have players develop the stories of some of the regions or NPCs, while your contributions serve as the glue that makes it all work together. This breaks somewhat with traditional RPG structures, in that you might not be the expert on all areas of the setting and plot.

Your collaboration will depend on the interests of you and the other players. Maybe one draws a city map, another makes the stats and personality for an NPC, another controls some monsters in combat, and a fourth doesn't want to do anything beyond playing their character. There's a trade-off here, because while you'll be off-loading some of your work, you'll also need to ensure consistency across these multiple sources of ideas. It can really help to keep a log of which player is in charge of each part of your setting. If you expect one of a player's specialties to appear in an upcoming session, let them know ahead of time so they can prepare or discuss their ideas in advance with you.

DECENTRALIZED STORYTELLING

So what if you want to go all the way and completely break down the walls between the GM and other players? What if you want to preside over a game in which anyone can speak for any of the NPCs, and when someone tries to determine what's down the next hallway, it's just as likely to come from another player as from you? Now we're talking about decentralized storytelling, the least traditional approach we'll cover here.

In this approach, one of your biggest jobs is asking questions or giving prompts. "When you open the door, what's beyond?" "How does the king react to Lem's taunt?" You can direct your questions to individual players, leave them open to all, and put forth your own suggestions.

This approach works best when players are comfortable with one another and willing to both take responsibility in building the story and accept that some of their ideas will go unused. It's well suited for shorter campaigns, or ones in which players take turns in the GM's seat.

CHALLENGES

The largest risk of putting narrative control in multiple people's hands is losing a cohesive story. When multiple people have conflicting ideas about the tone of the game or particulars of the setting, you can end up with something that doesn't satisfy anyone. One of your tasks as GM is to recap events to clarify and reinforce the shared narrative.

Shared narrative control also complicates planning ahead. The group might need to improvise an encounter, take a break while you (and maybe other players) prep to go in a new direction, or even revise their plans. It helps to limit yourself to creatures that you can quickly find stats for in a Bestiary volume or in the NPC Gallery of this book to avoid spending hours of work on creatures you won't use.

Also, don't lose sight of your own enjoyment! You shouldn't sacrifice how much fun you have for others.

STORY POINTS

If you prefer, you can give players a number of Story Points at the start of each session (typically 2 or 3). They can cash these in to determine what happens next in the story. Having a currency like this means you can keep your steady hand on the tiller while allowing other players to interject when it's important to them. For most groups, a Story Point should allow the player to suggest a plot twist that can be resolved quickly, or to establish a relevant fact or NPC attitude. It can't determine the outcome of an entire scene or vastly alter the reality of the setting.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

No two Pathfinder groups are exactly the same. At each gaming table, the GM and players work together to find their own style for the game and to tell their own stories. Some of these differences require the GM to make adjustments, especially for groups participating in Pathfinder Society Organized Play, large or small groups, and groups in which one or more players has needs that are not addressed directly in the Core Rulebook.

PATHFINDER SOCIETY ORGANIZED PLAY

The Pathfinder Society Organized Play campaign is a thriving, worldwide organization of players and GMs. While most home campaigns provide long-running stories with a consistent group, Pathfinder Society provides adventures designed to be completed in a single game session, so that players can continue their characters' stories whenever and wherever works best for them. To allow this flexibility while maintaining a fair experience, the Pathfinder Society campaign handles some tasks that are normally in the GM's purview, such as selecting which rules options are available to PCs. Pathfinder Society GMs are expected to stay true to the adventure as it is written but are encouraged to allow players to apply creative solutions to the situations they face. For example, PCs may be able to use illusions, bribery, or social skills to bypass a challenge that is presented in the scenario as a combat encounter. You can decide for yourself which alternative solutions seem reasonable based on the context of the adventure, consulting the Difficulty Classes section on page 503 of the *Core Rulebook* to set appropriate DCs for challenges. For more about playing, running, and organizing games for Pathfinder Society Organized Play, visit PathfinderSociety.club.

UNUSUAL GROUP SIZES

The standard group size for Pathfinder assumes four players and a GM. Page 489 of the *Core Rulebook* gives instructions for how to adjust for other group sizes, but additional changes may be helpful.

SMALL GROUPS

Small-group games focus more intently on the interests of the players and their characters, allowing for an experience that can be more customizable for each individual. However, they can also run into trouble when the PCs have gaps in their abilities. In many cases, the easiest way to adjust for a small group is to add additional characters. This could come in the form of allowing each player to play two characters or adding hirelings and support NPCs to the party to shore up roles that the PCs don't fill. When adding GM-controlled NPCs to the party, it's important to be sure that the PCs remain the stars of the show. In general, GM-controlled characters

shouldn't make major decisions, and they shouldn't outshine PCs at their primary skills or roles (see page 9 for more information about GM-controlled NPCs). You can also use variant rules like dual-class characters (page 192), free archetypes (page 194), or even just a few extra trained skills to help improve the PCs' overall flexibility.

If you don't add additional characters to the party or modify the PCs, it's a good idea to tailor challenges and storylines to their abilities as well as player interest. For example, if you have two players, a rogue and a bard, a heist could be a good fit. In combats, carefully consider how the PCs will fare against each opponent. Some monsters are particularly likely to incapacitate a single PC; in small groups, use such creatures carefully and consider raising the encounter difficulty and XP awards beyond what a creature of that level is normally worth. Meanwhile, creatures that depend on affecting or damaging large numbers of PCs at once might be less effective.

LARGE GROUPS

Large-group games bring together the creativity and enthusiasm of many players, and they lend themselves to combat at a grand scale. However, they also divide the GM's attention. Large groups also need to set ground rules for how many players need to be present for the game to run when some players are missing. Recaps at the beginning of each session are crucial to keep everyone on the same page. Delegation is one of your most powerful tools to keep the session running smoothly. For example, you can put the players in charge of recapping the events from the previous session, handling initiative, managing the party's treasury, looking up rules, or helping with accessories like props and music. (For information on even greater degrees of player delegation, check out page 32.) Also consider which tasks really need to be taken care of while everyone is there. For example, you could ask your players to handle selling items, deciding which common items they want to buy, and leveling up between sessions instead of at the table.

Each additional player adds to the length of combat twice: once for their own turn, and once for the additional foes on the field. By encouraging players to pay attention to the battle when it isn't their turn and to plan their actions as their turn approaches, you can shorten each player's turn and keep the battle moving swiftly.

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Inevitably, there will be situations and circumstances that don't involve the whole group. In a sufficiently large group, splitting the party is not necessarily dangerous. If the party splits up for more than a short stint, you can call for separate sessions to determine what happens to the two halves of the group, allowing them to reunite and share their findings afterward. Whether or not the party splits, having more players means less active time for each character. Look for opportunities to highlight each PC by providing challenges that play to their strengths or tie in story elements to which they are particularly connected.

PLAYER NEEDS

Sometimes, making your game accessible and fun for everyone at the table requires making some adjustments to your typical GMing style or setup. The first step is open communication so you can learn what the players need, what accommodations would be helpful, and what type of assistance players do and don't want to receive.

SENSORY DIFFERENCES

Players may have differences in the way that they process sensory information, as well as which senses they use. For players who are hard of hearing or who struggle to process large amounts of sensory information at once, selecting a quiet gaming venue and establishing ground rules about table talk (such as asking players not to

interrupt each other) can make the game more accessible. Such players can also often benefit from handouts they can consult during the session. Keep in mind the way your players perceive the world when describing locations. For example, if you have a blind or visually impaired player at the table, instead of simply describing what a location looks like, describe how it sounds and smells, the temperature of the room, the feeling of the breeze, and other aspects of the scene that they can identify with.

ATTENTION SPAN

It's not uncommon for people to struggle to maintain their attention for hours on end, especially for young players. If keeping attention is an issue at your table, add breaks to the game. Whether you're just taking a break to stretch and chat or enjoying a full meal in the middle of the game, switching up the context helps players refresh their focus. Some players remain more engaged if they have something else to do while playing, such as doodling or pacing. Maintaining attention can be particularly challenging for some players when their character is not engaged, such as when the party splits or when they have just finished their turn in a large combat. You can allow players to engage in other activities during the session, such as texting, reading, or playing other games, and then draw them back into the game when their character is active.

RARITY IN YOUR GAME

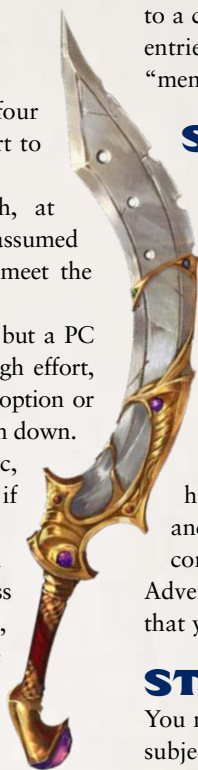
The rarity system is a powerful tool that helps you and your group customize your story, your characters, and your world to better match your game's themes and setting. You can also use it to keep the complexity of your game low by limiting access to unusual options.

This section supplements the Using Rarity and Access sidebar on page 488 of the *Core Rulebook*.

THE FOUR RARITIES

Let's first review the default usage for the four rarities in the game and how these already start to tell a story about your world.

- **Common** elements are prevalent enough, at least among adventurers, that a player is assumed to be able to access them provided they meet the prerequisites (if any).
- **Uncommon** elements are difficult to access, but a PC can usually find them eventually with enough effort, potentially by choosing a specific character option or spending substantial downtime tracking them down.
- **Rare** elements are lost secrets, ancient magic, and other options that PCs can access only if you specifically make them available.
- **Unique** elements are one of a kind. You have full control over whether PCs can access them. Named NPCs are unique creatures, though that doesn't mean their base creature type is unique. For instance, an orc named Graytusk is unique, but that doesn't mean it would be any harder for a PC encountering her to tell she's an orc—just to discern specific information about her.



DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

Just because something is common or uncommon in one context doesn't necessarily mean it's the same in others. This is specifically true when comparing the commonality of a creature and an ancestry. For instance, while hobgoblins are a relatively common monster for adventurers to encounter and are a common creature, in most settings they are still far less prevalent than humans or elves and would be an uncommon ancestry.

Because uncommon elements are available in certain circumstances, it often varies by locale, even within the same setting. For instance, a katana is uncommon in the *Core Rulebook* and in the Inner Sea region of Golarion, but in Asian fantasy-inspired Tian Xia, a katana would be common and some western weapons might be uncommon. Similarly, in an elven kingdom, uncommon elven weapons like the elven curve blade might be common.

ACCESS ENTRIES

Uncommon elements sometimes have an Access entry in their stat block. A character who meets the specifications

listed there has access to that option just like they would to a common option, even though it's uncommon. These entries include a statement such as "follower of Shelyn," "member of the Pathfinder Society," or "from Absalom."

STARTING ELEMENTS

Elements like ancestries, backgrounds, classes, and heritages that a character must select at character creation can still be uncommon or rare. Obviously, there's no opportunity for the character to search for them during play, but these rarities still indicate the prevalence of adventurers with those elements in the world. You can decide to allow them on a case-by-case basis depending on the campaign and the story your group wants to tell. For instance, a game set in the lizardfolk empire of Droon might have lizardfolk (normally uncommon) as a common ancestry while the typical common ancestries are less common. An official player's guide for a Pathfinder Adventure Path might have uncommon backgrounds that you can access by playing the Adventure Path.

STORYTELLING

You might craft a quest involving an uncommon or rare subject. For instance, players might encounter a door that requires a rare spell to open, and need to travel to an academy to learn it. If a player has their heart set on an option that's not common, look for ways to build a story in which their character acquires that option.

WORLDBUILDING

With the rarities at your fingertips, you and your group can start building a unique world using rarity as a tool. Imagine a world where one or more of the core classes are rare. Maybe the gods rarely answer the call of the faithful and a PC cleric is one of the only clerics in the world. Perhaps sorcerers are rare and feared by wizards' guilds, which have a stranglehold on spell access. For a grittier feel, you could make abilities that can remove afflictions uncommon or rare. You could even create a low-magic setting where all magic and magic items are uncommon or rare.

You can add, remove, or alter Access entries to fit your world. For instance, if in your world the goddess of death guards the secrets of resurrection, you might add an Access entry to *raise dead* and *resurrection* for characters who worship that goddess.

These are just a few ideas to help get you started. The number of ways you can vary rarities to adjust your setting, story, and game are nearly unlimited.

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CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE

Each adventure presents one contained story, but your campaign tells a more expansive one. Think of each adventure like an episode or arc and the campaign as a whole series. Though each adventure might tell a vastly different story, they should all tie into the themes and characters that stretch across the whole campaign.

A campaign interweaves multiple stories: the events of each adventure, the personal triumphs and failures of each PC, and the stories of NPCs who appear throughout. That means a campaign can become more than the sum of its parts. When you start out, you'll likely have a core structure in mind for your campaign, but through play it can—and should—grow and evolve.

BASIC STRUCTURES

When building your campaign, you can use these structures as a starting point. The Adventure Design section explains various styles of adventures on pages 41–43 that, after creating your basic campaign structure, can be used to inspire the creation of the adventures in your campaign.

ONE-SHOT

An adventure lasting one session, a one-shot works well for a highly themed adventure using characters or concepts that are novel, but that players might not want to stick with long-term.

Adventures 1, typically a dungeon crawl, horror, intrigue, or mystery

Top Level 1, but often starts at a higher level

Time Frame 1 session

BRIEF CAMPAIGN

This structure is meant for a brief, self-contained campaign. It can be ideal for introducing new players to Pathfinder, and can be extended to a longer campaign if the group wishes.

Adventures 2, typically one dungeon crawl followed by one high adventure; this format also works well for horror adventures

Top Level 4–5

Time Frame 3 months weekly, 6 months biweekly

EXTENDED CAMPAIGN

An extended campaign works well for a dedicated group that might want to switch to a new campaign or a different game after a year or so. It allows for significant character and plot development but doesn't reach the higher levels of the game.

Adventures 5, typically with multiple adventures fitting the main theme of the campaign (such as high adventure or gritty adventure), with other adventure styles for variety.

Top Level 11–13

Time Frame 1 year weekly, 1-1/2 years biweekly

EPIC CAMPAIGN

An ambitious and complex game, the epic campaign takes PCs all the way to level 20, pitting them against the greatest threats

in the world and beyond. This can be challenging in terms of time commitment and complexity, but it lets PCs develop into true legends, and the players will likely remember it for years.

Adventures 6 long adventures, typically starting with high adventure or a dungeon crawl and including military adventure, planar adventure, and romantic adventure

Top Level 20

Time Frame 1-1/2 years weekly, 3 years biweekly

LINKING ADVENTURES

In a campaign that includes multiple adventures, a smooth transition from one adventure to the next ties the story together. You might use NPCs who could appear in both adventures, a treasure or clue found in one adventure that becomes important in a later one, or even fallout from one adventure that causes the next adventure to take place. Related locations can help, too. Adventures that take place in neighboring regions, or both in the same region, have an inherent link. If they take place in two different places, you'll need a reason the PCs should travel between the two, and you can use this journey as a short, interstitial adventure.

ADVENTURE THEMES

Consider how each adventure's theme plays into the campaign as a whole. You might want to keep similar or recurring themes, especially if each adventure is part of one overarching storyline. On the other hand, this can feel repetitive, and some groups prefer variety and seeing their characters play off of different situations. To convey shifting themes, you can show established parts of the world changing to reflect the new theme. For instance, if you're switching from an adventure about subjugation to one of mayhem, the PCs could take down a villain who wants to enslave the populace, but then face opportunistic brigands who loot and pillage once order breaks down.

PLAYER GOALS

Ask what you and the other players enjoy and would like to see in the game. You can use these ideas as touchstones to build off of. When you get into the campaign itself, the PCs' goals come to the forefront. Find out what each character wants to achieve and look for opportunities you can place in the game world and adventures. Consider which part of the game most closely ties to each goal. A PC who wants to build an institution will need money and interpersonal connections, so you can use treasure

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and NPC interactions to give them the resources they need. For a character whose purpose is to help people in danger, build some encounters that include people who need to be rescued.

Look for good times to recap the state of a character's goals and remind the player how their character has progressed, particularly when something changes in relation to their goals. The Long-Term Goals section on page 22 gives you more details on how you can use goals in downtime.

CHANGING THE WORLD

As the group moves through the campaign, the events of their adventures and downtime should change the world around them. Show this through the responses the characters get from other people, the scenery they see around them, and their environment. You might be able to anticipate some changes, but most will come up in play and require you to make adjustments later on.

POWER LEVEL

As the game progresses, the power level of the PCs and their foes increases. Going up in level brings new, stronger abilities into the game, and likewise adventures bring in new monsters with commensurate capabilities. Higher-level adventures should present new challenges appropriate to the PCs' abilities, such as areas that can be accessed with flight at 7th level or higher. Beyond just

the rules, PCs should compel different reactions from the people they meet, as their reputation spreads and they exhibit abilities beyond what most people have ever seen.

RECURRING VILLAINS

Consider including villains who can appear multiple times over the course of several adventures. They don't necessarily need to be masterminds. Imagine an unscrupulous mercenary who works for major villain after major villain. When you create a recurring villain, it's best not to make them too integral to the story, since the PCs might take them down earlier than you expect! Have some contingency plans in place.

The advice about Portraying NPCs on page 9 applies especially to these recurring villains. As they reappear throughout the campaign, they should change in some of the same ways PCs do. Think about how previous run-ins with the PCs have shaped the recurring villain's emotions and plans. Which PC do they have the biggest grudge against and why? Do they bear scars from previous battles? Have they developed a countermeasure against a PC's spells or tactics?

VILLAIN GOALS

Just as PCs have goals, so do your villains. A recurring villain might have a vision for what the world should be and a step-by-step plan to get there. A plan gives you a clear way



to progress the plot, and an underlying goal guides you in deciding what the NPC does if their plan goes awry. It can be especially helpful to contrast the villain's goals with those of the PCs. If a PC wants to establish a trade network, maybe a villain plans to get rich robbing caravans or merchant ships. If a PC plans to found churches to a deity, a villain could worship one of that god's adversaries. Just like with PCs' goals, show how the villain's goal has impacted the world, even in small ways. Try to find ways the villain can make a difference even if the PCs are successful against them. A villain will look ineffective if the PCs foil every single plot or plan. For instance, the villain might turn a memorable NPC to their cause, set an institution ablaze, or invade a village. All of these outcomes can have memorable, long-lasting effects even if the villain's ultimate plan fails.

REWARDS

The *Core Rulebook* explains (on page 507) three types of concrete rewards covered by the rules: Hero Points, Experience Points, and treasure. Experience Points and treasure are the bedrock of progress in a campaign, since attaining a higher level and acquiring magic items let PCs take on more challenging adventures.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

In a standard game, Experience Points come from encounters of low threat or higher, and from accomplishments. Try to be consistent about what is worth accomplishment XP and what isn't, and give out at least some accomplishment XP every session. If two PCs pull off the same magnitude of task, they should get an equal amount of accomplishment XP. That doesn't mean you should allow XP "farming," however. Part of the assumption of accomplishment XP is that the accomplishment is novel and the result of something challenging. If someone got accomplishment XP for snatching a dragon's egg from a lair, someone collecting another egg wouldn't necessarily get accomplishment XP.

You might find that accomplishment XP doesn't work well for your game, especially if you're running a dungeon crawl or other game with less interaction with NPCs or fewer quests. In this case, you can remove accomplishment XP and use fast advancement speed (800 XP to level up) to move at the standard advancement speed.

TREASURE

The game's math is based on PCs looking to find, buy, or craft items that are the same level as them—this includes weapons and armor with fundamental runes, and items that help with the PC's favorite skills or tactics. A PC who gets the item at that level will typically be ahead of the monsters, hazards, and skill DCs briefly, before their challenges start to catch back up. The guidelines for awarding treasure,

meanwhile, have you give the party items 1 level higher than the PCs. This means the items found on adventures are more powerful than those a PC could make (which are capped at the PC's level). The treasure assignment is measured across a level instead of per encounter because some encounters won't have treasure, some will have extra treasure, and some treasure hoards or rewards might be found outside encounters entirely. If your campaign structure works better by giving out treasure for individual encounters—such as some dungeon crawls or sandbox games—see *Treasure by Encounter* on page 51.

As you choose treasure, look at the flow of treasure in the campaign, and see which PCs are ahead and which are behind. It's usually best to mix "core items," treasure linked to a PC's main abilities, with treasure that has unusual, less broadly applicable powers. For instance, a champion might not purchase *plate armor of the deep*, but they will likely wear it if they find it. These items should always be useful—a party without a primal spellcaster won't have much use for an *animal staff*.

The number of core items to give out depends partly on how much the campaign allows for crafting and buying items.

- If there are few limits on buying items and there's plenty of time to craft, make about half the permanent items you give out core items. The PCs have plenty of ways to obtain the items they want.
- If purchasing items and obtaining formulas is somewhat difficult, make about three-fourths of the permanent items core items. If a PC really wants an item, they might have to do extra work to get it.
- If there are no magic item shops or other ways to purchase items and formulas, make all the permanent items core items. In this case, it might work better for your game to use Automatic Bonus Progression (page 196) to eliminate the need for core items.

SELLING ITEMS

The PCs' ability to sell items plays a big part in their ability to equip themselves how they want. It's expected that a Pathfinder campaign strives for some amount of verisimilitude—that PCs can't find a buyer for every item, especially if they're selling multiple copies of the same thing. Players should not have the expectation that they can sell whatever they want whenever they want. They might be unable to sell items that wouldn't be in demand, have to take a lower percentage, or have trouble selling items in places without massive wealth.

If you don't want to deal with that level of detail, you can choose to make selling items more abstract, allowing the PCs to sell anything for half Price essentially at any time. Since this makes it far easier for PCs to outfit themselves how they want, they might be more powerful.



STARTING THE CAMPAIGN

Before your first session begins, communicate back and forth with the players about the following details to make sure you've planned your campaign to fit their preferences, then recap and communicate your final decisions.

- Establish the expected schedule and generally how long you expect the campaign to last. It's okay if you don't know the total length for sure, but you should still give an estimate.
- Inform the players when and where the first session will take place, what they should prepare in advance, and what materials to bring. If you're running a session zero to create characters first (page 7), let them know. You might also need to tell them whether to bring food, drinks, and other supplies beyond what they'll use for the game itself.
- Let the players know any restrictions or extra options for character building. Even if you plan to run a session zero, give them a heads-up before the session starts.
- Tell the players where in the game world the first session will take place.
- Give the players a basic idea of the genre or theme.

AT THE FIRST SESSION

If you're running a session zero, read the Session Zero section on page 7 for advice on your first session. For the first time you play through an adventure, follow these bits of advice.

- Recap the basics of the campaign you established earlier, particularly where it starts and any themes you feel will be important for the players to understand as they roleplay.
- Have the players introduce their characters. If they have detailed backstories, it's usually best that they start out just describing what the other PCs could learn with first impressions. If they want to go deeper into their backstory during play, they can do so later.
- Ask questions about the characters. Note down anything you think will be significant, so you can adjust your plans for later sessions. You'll want to keep doing this throughout play.
- Begin the adventure, using the Starting a Session steps on page 490 of the *Core Rulebook*. For your first adventure, find a good place for the PCs to meet and a reason for them to be together.

STARTING AT A HIGHER LEVEL

A typical campaign starts at 1st level, but you can start at a higher level if you choose. This can be especially satisfying for a one-shot or short campaign, or if your group wants to play a specific adventure made for higher-level groups. The PCs should start at the same level. They simply make a 1st-level character, then level it up the number of times needed to reach the starting level.

The Character Wealth table on page 511 of the *Core Rulebook* indicates how much currency and what common

items of various levels the character should start with. Let the players choose their own items and spend their currency on common items as well if they choose. This table gives them fewer items than they might have had if they had gained items through adventuring, balancing the fact that they can choose what items they want.

ENDING THE CAMPAIGN

A campaign might have a well-planned, emotionally resonant ending that executes perfectly, or the group might die in a ridiculous fashion at the worst time possible. It's important that the ending follow the story, wherever it has gone, even if it doesn't match the idea you had in your head at the start. Check in with your group, especially when you're getting close to the end of each adventure, to see how long they want the campaign to go on. Check in with yourself, too, and express your opinion to the other players. Ideally, you know at least a session in advance that the end is coming, allowing you to prepare for a thrilling conclusion. You might plan for the final session's gameplay to be a bit shorter—possibly just one big showdown—to allow time for an epilogue and for the group to reminisce and decompress at the end.

An epilogue can make the end of a campaign more fulfilling. First, let the group finish out their roleplaying in the final moments of the adventure until they're content. Then tell the group the results of what they accomplished in broad terms, with concrete details of what happens to certain places or allied NPCs. Ask the players what their characters do after the adventure. You might want to narrate a few short scenes, such as a PC tracking down an escaped villain and bringing them to justice. When your epilogue is done, thank everyone for playing. If the campaign ended in success for the PCs, give yourselves a round of applause. A victorious ending warrants celebration!

DEALING WITH FAILURE

If a campaign ends prematurely, get a sense from the players of whether they want to continue. The advice on Total Party Kills on page 30 should be helpful. If the campaign ended in a stranger way than a total party kill—say, a PC handing over the powerful relic the villain needed to complete a master plan—you can still look for ways the campaign might continue. Maybe the PCs struggle to survive in the world after the calamity, or maybe they have just enough time they might still be able to stop the plan.

THE NEXT CAMPAIGN

If the group plays another campaign in the same world that takes place after your previous campaign, think through the repercussions of the last campaign and change the world as needed. You might introduce new elements into the world that call back to the previous campaign: newly powerful factions, new settlements, or new options for player characters such as backgrounds, all based on the impact the previous PCs made on the world.

ADVENTURE DESIGN

When making your own adventure, you get to choose the themes, play style, and NPCs that most appeal to you and your group. This section gives you tips for making your adventures exciting and memorable, and for creating them quickly and efficiently.

Creating an adventure for your players can be one of the most fulfilling parts of being a GM. Get started with the basic tips on adventure building on page 487 of the *Core Rulebook*, then flesh out your adventure using the following adventure recipes to quickly outline an adventure based on your chosen theme. Reading other adventures is a great way to get ideas, whether they're published adventures or ones your friends have written. You can borrow ideas and structures if they work for your game, and tweak as needed.

PLAYER MOTIVATIONS

One of your most important and rewarding tasks is getting to know your players and what makes them tick, then implementing plot hooks that speak to their motivations. If your players all like similar things (maybe they all like epic storylines, or all prefer tactical combat), your job will be a bit easier. But for most groups there's a mix, and you'll want to put in a detailed NPC who appeals to one player's love of social scenes, a powerful villain to engage a player who loves stories of winning against overwhelming odds, and exotic animals that attract a player who's into having animal friends. If you're not sure what your players enjoy, ask them in advance what they'd like to see in the game!

Considering player motivations doesn't mean assuming you know what the players or their characters will do! It can be risky to expect PCs to react in certain ways or take certain paths. Knowing their motivations gives you a way to put in elements you expect will appeal to your players, but their decisions will still take the adventure in unexpected directions. The important thing is getting the players engaged, not predicting the future.

KEEPING IT VARIED

You can give players variety through the types of challenges the group faces (combat, social, problem-solving, and so on), the locations they explore, the NPCs they meet, the monsters they face, and the treasure they acquire. Even if you're building an enclosed dungeon, you don't want to place a combat in every room, or exploration will quickly become stale.

Think in terms of sessions. If your group gets through five scenes per session, how do you make one game session feel different from another? Maybe two of the scenes in each are fairly basic combat encounters, but if you make the other scenes significantly different, or even if you set the encounters in different environments, the sessions won't feel repetitive. Also think about the tools used to solve each situation. Maybe one requires complex negotiations, another brute force, and a third sneaking about. Aim to

give everybody something compelling, and ideally targeted at their motivations. This translates to mechanical details, too. Inching across a balance beam requires different skills than rebuilding a broken key.

THEME AND FEELING

Think about the emotional and thematic touchstones you want to hit during play. Good games elicit strong emotions, and planning for them can give an emotional arc to an adventure in addition to the narrative arc. Consider what you want players to feel as they play. Is it triumph? Dread? Sadness? Optimism? None of these will be the *only* emotions to come out, but they will inform how you build the settings and NPCs. Adventure Recipes (below) gives steps to effectively implement theme and feeling.

ADVENTURE RECIPES

These procedures help you build an adventure skeleton or outline. You'll then go through and flesh out the details of the adventure, including adversaries and locations. As you play, you'll keep adjusting to fit the events of the game. Anything you haven't already introduced can be changed as needed. Just like with any recipe, you're meant to adjust the details to fit your group's preferences. You might stray far from your starting point, and that's OK!

These recipes use six steps. You might want to look ahead to your future steps and make choices out of order based on what's most important for you to convey. The catch-all term "opposition" refers to the various adversaries and obstacles the PCs will face. The opposition should be thematically consistent, but not necessarily monolithic. It might contain multiple individuals or groups, who might not get along with one another.

- **Styles (page 41):** The overall vibe of your game, such as a gritty game, dungeon crawl, or high adventure. These frameworks offer guidelines for the number of sessions and types of encounters that work best.
- **Threats (page 43):** Thematic dangers to incorporate into your game, and ways to evoke them as you play. The style and threat are the core parts of your recipe.
- **Motivations (page 44):** Determine more specifically what the opposition's goals and motivations are.
- **Story Arcs (page 44):** This section gives you guidance on how to construct story arcs that will play out over your adventure and maybe beyond.
- **NPCs and Organizations (page 45):** The characters and factions you include should fit the theme.
- **Mechanics (page 45):** Your last step is adding in the individual creatures, hazards, treasure, and so on.

STYLES

These frameworks for building your adventure include some basic elements to get you started outlining an adventure. Slot ideas from the threats section (page 43) into this structure, then customize as you see fit.

DUNGEON CRAWL

Number of Sessions 3–4

Exploration Scenes 1 long voyage to reach the dungeon; 3 voyages through long, trapped hallways or mazes; 1 secure cave or other staging area; 2 secret passages or rooms

Combat Encounters 2 trivial, 4 low, 6 moderate, 6 severe. Many encounters can be bypassed through secret routes.

Roleplaying Encounters 4 conversations with dungeon creatures; 1 negotiation to establish a truce

Encounter Tropes Cramped quarters, short lines of sight, and poor lighting conditions, with occasional vaulted chambers and flooded crypts. Traps and puzzles.

GRITTY ADVENTURE

Number of Sessions 5–7

Exploration Scenes 1 long voyage, plagued by attacks; 2–3 voyages through urban environments; 1 prison break, heist, or other test of skill

Combat Encounters 2 trivial, 4 low, 7 moderate, 8 severe; possibly 1 extreme. Foes are often other humanoids.

Roleplaying Encounters 2 battles of wits, 2 chances to bypass opponents with deception or threats, 2 opportunities to gather information and rumors

Encounter Tropes Stakes are often more personal, such as the PCs clearing their names from a false accusation or being paid to eliminate a problem. Betrayal, ambushes, and other duplicity. Town fires, weather conditions, unfriendly crowds. The *Pathfinder Critical Hit Deck* is particularly appropriate.

HIGH ADVENTURE

Number of Sessions 6–8

Exploration Scenes 2 long voyages, often by sea or air, punctuated with combat; 1 trapped dungeon, tournament, or other test of skill

Combat Encounters 16 moderate, 8 severe. Avoid low- and trivial-threat battles.

Roleplaying Encounters 2 battles of wits; 4 conversations with bizarre creatures

Encounter Tropes Unique environments and terrain for dynamic battles. Swinging from balconies on curtains, fighting atop high wires, racing chariots, and so on. Use difficult terrain sparingly, coupled with creative ways to get around it. Large groups of low-level troops the PCs can defeat with ease.

HORROR

Number of Sessions 1–2

Exploration Scenes 1 short voyage on foot; 2–4 creepy areas to investigate, like haunted mansions or dark forests

Combat Encounters 2 moderate, 1 severe, possibly 1 extreme. Avoid trivial- and low-threat encounters, except as moments

ADVENTURE PRESENTATION

When you're writing up your own adventure, you don't need to go into the same level of detail you'd see in a published adventure. You might be able to get by with just an outline, some bullet points for each NPC, a breakdown of encounters, and a few rough maps. Or maybe for your style of running games, you prefer to have some text written about each scene, or even particular lines of dialogue. If you're creating your first adventure, it can be good to write out a little more than you need. Just keep in mind that things might change in play. If you prepared more than you actually used, that's normal! Detailing NPCs or locations in particular can be useful, especially if they're going to appear again. But in many of these cases, you'll add details at the table and can jot down those notes for later.

RUNNING YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

It's often easier to run an adventure you made yourself, but that's not true for everybody. If you notice as you run your adventure that your notes don't have enough for you to go on, you can be more thorough next time. And if something ended up inconsistent, there's nothing wrong with telling your players you want to revise something you previously said.

Because this is your own creation, it's closer to your heart. If the adventure doesn't go well, it can sting. Sometimes this is because of random chance, sometimes due to unforeseen decisions, and occasionally because you made a mistake. Those are all normal parts of the game! One of the things you'll internalize the more you run games is that you're a part of the creative process and don't need to be perfect.

of relief in a longer adventure. Extreme-threat encounters against overwhelming foes are excellent in horror one-shots.

Roleplaying Encounters 2 conversations with doubtful authority figures, 1 opportunity to gather information and rumors, 1 revelation of a horrible truth

Encounter Tropes Surprising and jarring encounters, making it hard for the PCs to feel safe. Encounters that feel overwhelming, even when they're not. Retreat is often the right option (include a reasonable way for the PCs to escape).

INTRIGUE

Number of Sessions 2–3

Exploration Scenes 1 long voyage, often by land or sea; 3–4 competitions, performances, or other test of skill; 1–2 infiltrations or escapes

Combat Encounters 2 trivial, 2 low, 4 moderate, 1 severe. Severe-threat encounters should be reserved for major reveals of the ongoing intrigue—an ally is revealed to be a foe, a schemer is exposed and must call on his guard, and so on.

Roleplaying Encounters 2–3 battles of wits; 2 political or courtroom scenes; 1 conversation with a cryptic source; 2 opportunities to gather information and rumors

Encounter Tropes Urban environments, including fights atop runaway carriages, around (and atop) banquet tables, and

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running over rooftops. Ambushes in apparently safe social settings. Assassination attempts.

MILITARY ADVENTURE

Number of Sessions 2–3

Exploration Scenes 1 long march and 2–3 short marches, or a tour of the defenses for a siege; 2–3 trapped enemy campsites and secret spy redoubts

Combat Encounters 4 low, 4 moderate, 1 severe. Most combat encounters should be made up of 2–4 foes, typically humanoid soldiers with a range of capabilities.

Roleplaying Encounters 1–2 skill challenges to convince neutral parties to become allies or raise troops' morale

Encounter Tropes Fortified battlegrounds, with moats, walls, defensive towers, and siege weapons. Victory conditions that are goal or deadline oriented—holding a gate for 10 minutes while reserves rush to defend it, setting fire to an enemy catapult, rescuing prisoners, and so on.

MYSTERY

Number of Sessions 2–3

Exploration Scenes 2–3 trapped rooms, concealed hideouts, or other tests of skill; 2 puzzles or investigations

Combat Encounters 2 trivial, 4 low, 6 moderate, 6 severe. Solving the mystery uncovers an advantage over the most powerful foe.

Roleplaying Encounters 1 battles of wits, 1 conversation with

a bizarre creature, 1 opportunity to gather information and rumors, 1 gathering to reveal the answer to the mystery

Encounter Tropes Encounters come naturally during investigations or upon discovering some element of the mystery. Multiple clues can send PCs to the same locations; if the mystery stalls, some creature that doesn't want the PCs to solve the mystery can attack to move the plot forward.

PLANAR ADVENTURE

Number of Sessions 6–8

Exploration Scenes 3–4 long voyages through different planes, often by *gate*, spells, or planar vessel, punctuated by combat; 1–2 scouting a demiplane, planar city or fortress, or other planar stronghold

Combat Encounters 12 moderate, 12 severe. Avoid trivial- and low-threat encounters, except as set dressing to introduce a new plane.

Roleplaying Encounters 6 conversations with bizarre creatures, including some with alien ways of thinking; 2 opportunities to gather information and rumors

Encounter Tropes Fights showcasing otherworldly environs—on the sides of glaciers, in limitless oceans, on chunks of rock floating along rivers of lava, atop bottomless pits, or on the chains of 100-foot-tall gates.

ROMANTIC ADVENTURE

Number of Sessions 4–6

Exploration Scenes 1 tour of a kingdom or other central locale;
1 adventure into the wilds on a hunting trip or bandit hunt;
1 tournament to prove a PC's love or worth

Combat Encounters 3 low, 6 moderate, 3 severe. Emphasize emotional stakes and battles that end with the loss of honor or pride, not life.

Roleplaying Encounters 2 battles of wits, 1 grand ball, 1 entreaty before a ruler, 2 scenes of relaxation or carousing with unexpected import

Encounter Tropes Duels—social or combat—against romantic rivals. PCs and their foes fight only for a purpose or cause. Savvy enemies have strong connections to the PCs.

THREATS

Think of each type of threat as the deep, visceral danger the enemies represent. NPCs should be avatars of the threat, whether they're enemies who represent different aspects of the threat or allies and bystanders damaged by it. Each threat entry gives a brief description, followed by some bullet points you can use to guide you in expressing the consequences of the threat. This is followed by monsters that typify this theme. As always, you can come up with your own thematic threats too!

CORRUPTION

The opposition wants to weaken or even change the motivation of a place, person, institution, ideal, or group.

- Show the effects of corruption on people and places, especially those closely connected to the PCs. Once-safe areas become less friendly and present threats, allies become unable to help or even turn against the PCs.
- Make enemies subtle; patient; and willing to allow rumors, lies, diseases, and poisons time to take effect. In battle, they may be satisfied to curse PCs and their allies or otherwise inflict long-term afflictions, then retreat.
- Contrast the corruption with education, healing, and working towards betterment.
- When the PCs make progress, allow them to expose agents of corruption, and inoculate allies and neutral parties against the growing threat or educate them about it.

Foes algholthu, fiends, undead

DEVASTATION

The opposition wants to destroy or lay waste to a place, person, institution, ideal, or group.

- Show the effects of destruction on people and places, especially those the PCs hold dear. Show them desperate, devoid of resources, and psychologically changed.
- Make enemies hard to reason with and overwhelming in number. In battle, they want not just to win, but to kill, maim, or devour.
- Contrast devastation with forces of preservation and order.
- When the PCs make progress, show the slow recovery from devastation.

Foes chromatic dragons, demons, orcs

EXTREMISM

The opposition seeks a massive change—one they think is for the better. Their violent means of achieving it put them in conflict with the PCs.

- Demonstrate the ruthlessness of the enemy, especially the discrepancy between their care for their cause and their ambivalence or hatred toward everything else.
- Have enemies focus purely on their goal. Have them fall back on their rhetoric or dogma to justify themselves.
- If something about the extremists' cause is just—such as preserving the natural world or protecting their people—reveal the foes' sympathetic side. Demonstrate the horror





BUILDING A SANDBOX

In a “sandbox” game, you give the players a sizable location to explore and let them decide how to go about it. A sandbox doesn’t have as many time-sensitive events as a directed adventure, and the flow of the game is driven more by the players than by the opposition. You can put self-contained dungeons or other locations within the sandbox, but it’s up to the players when and how to visit them or deal with them.

To make a sandbox, create about triple the number of encounters and spread them out among multiple locations or factions. You can expect the PCs won’t deal with all of them. In most cases, you’ll want to determine where the PCs are headed next before the end of a session so you can prepare for the next session. Depending on the size and complexity of the location, the number of encounters might be much higher. Treat each sub-area as a kind of mini-adventure, and only loosely sketch it until you know what the PCs’ plans are.

of what they’re fighting against in addition to the horror of the way they fight it.

- When the PCs make progress, show uncertainty or demoralization in their foes, possibly even desertion.

Foes cultists, revolutionaries

MAYHEM

The opposition is a force for mayhem, without any greater plan or long-term goal. It may be a mindless force of violence such as a wounded beast, or a thinking foe that simply revels in causing chaos and damage.

- Mayhem is easy to track and find, often leaving a trail of destruction in its path. Show how the senseless violence causes uncertainty and fear, disrupting both settlements and the natural order of things.
- A single powerful foe is a common source of mayhem, but a pack, herd, cult, or secret society could also be to blame. The source of the mayhem may be the result of the natural order being out of balance, or might be a distraction set off by a different foe looking to use it to further its own goals.
- Emphasize the cascading effects of unchecked mayhem. Normal trade, farming, migration, and similar systems are disrupted, causing problems far from the immediate location of violence and disruption.
- When the PCs make progress, show how resilient systems can recover from massive disruptions but may need additional help or protection.

Foes beasts, dinosaurs, drakes, giants

SUBJUGATION

The opposition wants to rule over a group, location, or even the world. Their ultimate objective is to control and rule.

- Show how groups submit to subjugation rather than suffer the consequences of resistance. The PCs see elements of culture destroyed to ensure subjugation—are religions and churches destroyed, subverted, or replaced? Are lackeys put in place to keep oppressed populations in line?

- Make enemies self-righteous, focused, and in control of groups they have previously subjugated. Fights aren’t just for the sake of violence, but steps towards greater control.
- Show opposition: open conflict, rebellion, secret groups, sabotage, and countercultural art. Give PCs the opportunity to support or participate in each.
- When the PCs make progress, have previously cowed or neutral parties be moved to rebel.

Foes chromatic dragons, devils, hags, hobgoblins, rakshasas

MOTIVATIONS

Think about your opposition, and what their goals and motivations are. The motivation of the opposition needs to match your threat. If you have multiple adversaries, their motivations should all work toward your theme, but they might have different goals and act more as rivals or enemies. Motivations should be more than one dimensional. There should be a reason for every action the opposition takes—not necessarily a good one or a smart one, but a believable one. Be true to each character!

Consider these questions so you can use the answers when deciding what the opposition will do.

- What does the opposition want?
- Who or what does the opposition fear? (And no, “the PCs” isn’t an answer.)
- Why is the opposition sure to succeed? If the PCs don’t do anything, what makes the opposition unstoppable?
- What are the opposition’s weaknesses? How can they be bribed or tricked? What’s something they ignore that might be used against them?

STORY ARCS

Keep several story arcs in mind. Most of these will be driven by the opposition in the early going, but PCs might initiate their own story arcs. Think of what the beginning, middle, and end of each arc might look like. Imagine a logical end point the arc would reach if nothing else changes. Then, adjust it based on events in the game. As changes occur, revisit the end point you’ve imagined. If the adversary’s plan has been derailed, what might they do instead? Story arcs should reflect the theme of the adventure and be well-positioned to show off motivations.

Many arcs will last only for the duration of one adventure, but others build up and recur across the whole campaign. Include some of each so you have variety. This also provides closure, as the players can see some storylines wrapped up in the short term and others over a long period. Too many dangling plot threads can result in some being forgotten or make players feel overloaded.

Touchstones like the ones below make a story arc adaptable, not too restricted to specific scenes or characters.

- **Use motifs.** Use repeated thematic elements, visuals, phrases, and items to reinforce the connection between one adventure or segment of the story and another. The motif can also build in complexity as you move further along in the overarching story.



- **Follow character growth.** Respond to how the PCs changed in previous adventures. Their next undertaking should reflect who they are now.
- **Escalate!** Build on the previous story and show that the next threat is scarier. The first adventure may endanger a village, the next a city, the next a whole nation, and so on.
- **Bring in recurring characters.** A recurring character is especially strong if they appear in similar circumstances each time. For instance, a merchant who travels the world might appear in the campaign only when she wants the PCs to undermine her rivals.
- **Make each adventure count.** While developing an arc, don't diminish individual adventures by making what happened in them inconsequential compared to the larger story. Illustrate the consequences of such adventures so the players feel a sense of accomplishment for completing one before they move onto the next. Each adventure needs some sort of denouement to show immediate and lingering effects of the PCs' victory or defeat.

NPCs AND ORGANIZATIONS

Allied, neutral, and adversarial NPCs and organizations can all contribute to the theme. You'll want most to follow the theme directly, like the examples in Threats on page 43. However, you can add a few counterpoints

to the theme. For example, a horror game might include one or two NPCs who are more hopeful, either to grant respite from the dread or to kill off to show just how bad things are. Including NPCs who aren't adversaries makes the world feel more real. It also increases the stakes, as PCs have people to care about, protect, and socialize with. You'll often find that NPCs you create will become more or less important than you expected. You can "demote" an NPC if the players don't find them interesting or "promote" them if the PCs like them more than expected.

MECHANICS

Last of all, you'll fill out specific encounters, NPCs, treasure hoards, maps, and so on. For many games, you can save most of this work for between later sessions, spreading out your preparations over the course of the game.

You can find more detail on these in the *Core Rulebook*:

- Treasure guidelines (page 508)
- Accomplishment XP (page 507)
- Environments (page 512)
- Building Encounters (page 488)
- Hazards (page 522)

You can also find more information on these in this book:

- Building your own creatures (page 56)
- Building your own hazards (page 74)
- Building encounters (page 46)

ENCOUNTER DESIGN

Creating a compelling encounter goes beyond just following the guidelines for selecting monsters of a given level. Good encounters have a place in the story, compelling adversaries, interesting locations, and twists and turns to make them dynamic.

Encounters play a fundamental part in roleplaying games, but it can be tricky to know where to start when building them. This section covers ways to expand on the basics provided on page 489 of the *Core Rulebook* to make your encounters an exciting and integral part of the plot. Encounter design goes hand in hand with location, map, and adventure design. You might set an adventure in a swamp and populate it with swamp creatures and environmental features. Or you might have a dungeon denizen in mind, and structure a section of your dungeon to fit that creature.

When you're starting out, straightforward encounters of low or moderate threat can let you get your bearings. Then, you can increase complexity as you get more confident and as the PCs collect more tools to use against their foes. The more encounters you build, the more comfortable you'll get with your own personal style. You can always come back here to get more ideas or advice on executing a certain type of encounter.

VARIETY

Variety in encounters is essential to let players try new tactics and give different PCs chances to shine as they face foes with weak points they're uniquely suited to exploiting. Consider the following forms of encounter variety.

- **Theme:** Look for ways to include varied creatures and locations. Even if the PCs delve into a dungeon inhabited by drow, they should encounter other creatures, too! All creatures should have a justification for fitting in, but no place needs to be uniform.
- **Difficulty:** A string of moderate-threat encounters can feel flat. Use low- and even trivial-threat encounters to give PCs chances to really dominate, and severe-threat encounters for especially powerful enemies. Extreme-threat encounters should be used sparingly, for enemies who match the threat posed by the PCs and have a solid chance of beating them!
- **Complexity:** Use high complexity judiciously, saving it for important or memorable fights.
- **Encounter Composition:** The number of creatures per encounter and their levels should vary. Higher-level single enemies, squads of enemies, and large numbers of lackeys all feel different.
- **Setup:** Not all encounters should start and end the same way. PCs might sneak up on unprepared enemies, get ambushed by foes hunting them, enter into a formal duel, or find a diplomatic overture fails and turns into a fight. On the other side, enemies might all be taken out, retreat, beg for mercy, or even shift the encounter to a chase or other phase.

- **Information:** Uncertainty can increase the tension and sense of danger the players feel. Ambushes, fights against unknown foes or foes behind battlements, and other scenarios can create this basic uncertainty.

ENCOUNTER LOCATIONS

Choose compelling settings for your encounters. When encounters take place in a building or lair, the most significant environmental features originate from the occupants, both past and present. Think about their tastes, biology, or wealth. These features could be natural, such as the sickening reek of decay in the lair of a great predator. They could also be alchemical, such as a cloud of poisonous gas, or magical, such as a strange electric current that arcs through the walls and occasionally leaps out at passersby.

In some cases, you'll have a location in which an enemy always appears, and you can design your location to suit that specific creature. Other times, an encounter might appear in a variety of places, such as a guard patrol or wandering monster. In these cases, you'll need several terrain and structure options so there's something interesting about the environment no matter where the battle takes place.

MAPS AND TERRAIN

Features on the map have a substantial impact on the flow of combat. Three considerations to keep in mind when designing a map are maneuverability, line of sight, and attack ranges. Even empty rooms and corridors can provide variety based on their size and shape. Narrow passageways make natural choke points. In particularly small rooms, space is at a premium, favoring melee combatants and making area effects hard to aim without friendly fire. By contrast, huge areas lend themselves to spread-out combat, which gives plenty of room to use all manner of abilities but poses challenges for ones with limited range. To make large rooms more interesting, add furniture, stalagmites, or other features the PCs and their foes can duck behind for cover.

INHABITANT OR INTRUDER?

In most cases, the PCs enter territory that's far more familiar to their foes than it is to them. NPCs and monsters who live in an area are likely to be adapted to its dangers, either because they know where they are and how to avoid them, or because they are unaffected by them. A kobold in their lair might bait a PC into walking into a trap the kobold avoided. Marshland may be troublesome terrain for most PCs, but it poses little inconvenience to amphibious creatures. When using creatures with the ability to burrow, climb, or swim, consider incorporating features such as



mazelike corridors, high walls with platforms, or rivers. If the foes are smaller or larger than the PCs, consider including paths, cubbyholes, staircases, or narrow passages that one side of the fight can use more effectively.

Sometimes, though, the PCs must defend their own base from intruders. In these situations, you're flipping the script, so give the PCs time to trap and ward the area. Watching the invaders fall prey to hazards and ambushes can be a delightful change of pace for your players.

WILD WEATHER

On a bright, sunny day, the PCs see clearly and fight without obstruction, but adding wind, precipitation, or fog creates additional challenges. Rain creates sloshy, muddy ground that slows movement, and cold weather introduces the threat of slippery patches of ice. Only the most extreme temperatures have a direct impact on the PCs during an encounter, but a slog through blistering heat or freezing cold can leave the PCs worn out and more vulnerable to foes. Light levels play a key role in both outdoor and indoor encounters. Although torches are plentiful, their reach is limited, and lights are sure to draw attention in dark areas.

BUDGETING FOR TERRAIN

If you include terrain that's tricky to navigate or takes extra work to deal with, consider whether it should count toward the encounter's XP budget. A fight that requires

Climbing, Swimming, or pushing through difficult terrain can be much tougher—especially if the enemies have strong ranged attacks. Think about the impact of the terrain in advance, especially if the battle would already be a severe threat, or you might kill the party. You can pick an equivalent monster level for your terrain and factor that into your budget, or just assign extra XP at the end if the threat without terrain is on the low or moderate end.

ENEMY MOTIVATIONS

Every encounter should happen for a reason. Consider a creature's motivation to fight. Is it defending its lair? Robbing to enrich itself? Following sadistic impulses? Simply being paid to fight? You may realize a creature doesn't have a compelling motivation, or that the PCs have done something that eliminates the impetus to fight. In that case, the encounter doesn't need to happen! Your game might be more satisfying if the PCs' clever actions avoid the fight—provided you award them XP accordingly.

MORALE

Think how an enemy reacts when a fight is going poorly for them—or well! Enemies who do something other than fight to the death make an encounter more dynamic and believable. While PCs occasionally encounter truly fanatical zealots or single-minded creatures that would never back down from a fight, most creatures—even nonsapient

QUICK ADVENTURE GROUPS

If you want an easy framework for building an encounter, you can use one of the following basic structures and slot in monsters and NPCs.

- **Boss and Lackeys (120 XP):** One creature of party level + 2, four creatures of party level – 4
- **Boss and Lieutenant (120 XP):** One creature of party level + 2, one creature of party level
- **Elite Enemies (120 XP):** Three creatures of party level
- **Lieutenant and Lackeys (80 XP):** One creature of party level, four creatures of party level – 4
- **Mated Pair (80 XP):** Two creatures of party level
- **Troop (80 XP):** One creature of party level, two creatures of party level – 2
- **Mook Squad (60 XP):** Six creatures of party level – 4

creatures like animals—back down from a battle they’re obviously losing. This normally means foes fleeing at a certain point, potentially ending the encounter, but if the PCs need to capture those opponents, it could add a secondary objective and split their focus. Look at how differences in morale between participants impact the fight. For instance, after the necromancer’s living allies surrender to the PCs, she might activate a latent magic she implanted within them, killing them and merging their bodies into an enormous undead abomination. An enemy’s morale could even change the encounter from combat to social, as the PCs enter negotiations over a surrender or try to convince their foes of the errors of their ways.

DYNAMIC ENCOUNTERS

While you can certainly create enjoyable encounters by placing a group of opponents in a square room with little else, you have numerous tools to create encounters that are more interactive and dynamic. These tools can challenge your players to invent new strategies, inspire interesting character decisions, and make your setting richer.

No encounter needs to use all of the elements presented here, and not all encounters need more than one or two. The more complex a dynamic encounter is, the longer it takes to run and the more demanding it is. In general, these tools are perfectly suited for boss encounters, for memorable foes, and as a spice to add throughout your campaign however often works best for you and your players.

HAZARDS IN COMBAT

In isolated encounters where the PCs have plenty of time to recover from hazards’ effects, simple hazards can feel more like speed bumps than true challenges. But when combined with other threats, even simple hazards can prove perilous. A noisy explosion can draw attention, allowing foes to burst through the door for a dramatic start to the encounter. Simple hazards can also be an active part of an encounter, particularly if the foes know how to avoid triggering them.

As their name suggests, complex hazards are a more

powerful tool for encounters. Because they continue to act, they are an ongoing presence in the fight. When combined with hostile creatures, complex hazards offer the PCs plenty of choices for what they want to do next. This is particularly true if foes benefit from the hazard. Should the PCs first disable the array of pipes spewing magical fire into the room, or should they prioritize the fire elemental growing stronger with exposure to the inferno? There’s no right answer, and the PCs’ choices have a clear impact on the obstacles they face. Hazards in combat shine when they give the PCs ways to contribute meaningfully other than dealing damage to a creature. Interesting actions to disable a hazard are a fun way to give several PCs something fresh and different to do rather than piling on damage.

EVOLVING BATTLEFIELDS

While some battlefields are relatively static, allowing the PCs and foes to clobber each other until one side wins, complex or evolving battlefields can lead to far more memorable encounters. One of the most straightforward ways to create an evolving battlefield is with dynamic environmental features. Maybe the floating platforms that make up the room’s floor shuffle around on their own turn each round, or various points teleport creatures to different locations—possibly between two rooms where separate battles take place simultaneously. These dynamic features have some overlap with complex hazards, though they don’t tend to be an opposition or obstacle specifically threatening the PCs.

Similarly, a third party in the encounter, perhaps a rampaging monster or a restless spirit, could pose a danger to both sides but potentially benefit either. For instance, perhaps the PCs or their foes could harness this third party as a dangerous but powerful ally with a successful skill check of some kind or by making a risky bargain.

Sometimes the evolving battlefield is more of a state change, or series of state changes, and less of a constant presence. For instance, defeating a ritualist and ending his ritual could cause the foes to lose a powerful beneficial effect but unleash a demon that crawled through the remains of the botched ritual, or cause part of the room to collapse from the magical backlash. Major physical changes to the environment, like such a collapse, portions of the room rising or falling, or water beginning to rush in and fill the room, can force the PCs to rethink their plans to handle the new situation. Sometimes the evolving battlefield is more of an unexpected plot twist that occurs in the middle of the encounter. Perhaps the evil tyrant reveals that they were a dragon all along, or reinforcements arrive for whichever side was outmatched. Whatever you choose, make sure it changes things up and makes the encounter feel more dynamic and different. For instance, raising up a portion of the battlefield that isn’t particularly relevant when neither the PCs nor their foes are likely to care is less interesting than raising up the pedestal holding the jewel the PCs and their enemies are trying to recover.

INTRODUCTION

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COMBINING AND SEPARATING ENCOUNTERS

Picture this: the PCs storm a castle. They choose to eschew stealth in favor of a direct approach. On the ramparts, a guard spots them and raises an alarm. The sound of horns and whistles blare throughout the keep as each defender ensures that everyone is ready for a fight. And then, they politely wait in whatever room they were already standing in for the PCs to come and attack them. It sounds pretty unrealistic, and it feels unrealistic at the table. Many players find it far more satisfying when their foes take reasonable actions and countermeasures against them. This means moving to defensible positions or banding together with allies. Taken to an extreme, combining encounters can quickly lead to fights that are unwinnable, so be careful. In the castle example, some guards may come out to attack the PCs, while others cluster around the central keep. Perhaps each individual patrol of guards around the castle is a trivial-threat encounter, but as they gather together, they form groups of gradually escalating threat. Such groups give the PCs a sense of how challenging their opposition is, so that if a fight against six guards is a challenge, they won't try to pick a fight with 30. When the PCs' foes amass into an overwhelming force, give the PCs fair warning and a chance to retreat and try again another day. Of course, if the PCs come back after the alarm has been raised, the guards are likely to change their rotations to better secure the keep.

The most common reason to separate an encounter into multiple pieces is to set up a combined encounter, like when an injured foe retreats to gather reinforcements. This provides the PCs with a choice: do they ignore the fleeing enemy and focus on the battle in front of them, or do they split their own forces, weighing the risk of being led into a dangerous encounter against the chance of stopping later foes from preparing for their approach? An encounter might also separate into pieces because of dramatic changes to the battlefield, such as a collapsing ceiling or a magical wall that prevents those on each side of the barrier from accessing the other without spending actions to bypass the obstruction.

TIME PRESSURE

Time pressure adds an extra sense of urgency to any encounter and can be a great way to make an otherwise trivial- or low-threat encounter tactically engaging, satisfying, and memorable. After all, while low- and trivial-threat encounters have an incredibly low chance of defeating the PCs, the opposition can usually hold on long enough to make the PCs spend a few rounds to defeat them unless the PCs expend more resources than they normally would on such foes. Time pressure is often related to a secondary objective in the encounter, though it could be a countdown directly related to the encounter itself. For instance, if the ritual will grant a lich its apotheosis in 4 rounds, the heroes need to defeat the lich before then!

PITFALLS

This section arms you with a wide variety of useful tricks to add interest to your encounters, but you should keep an eye out for some common pitfalls of encounter building.

- **Don't Make Every Encounter Complex:** There are many ways to make complex and dynamic encounters, but making every single encounter complex will become exhausting for you and your players. Some encounters should be simple, both because it will make the world feel more real and because it's a good way for the group to relax without as much to keep track of.
- **Avoid Flat Difficulty:** Ensure that not too many of your encounters fall at the same threat level. Having some low- and even trivial-threat battles adds variety, and it's great to throw in a few severe encounters beyond just bosses.
- **Beware of Unexpected Difficulty:** You might end up with creatures that have abilities that fit well together, making them extremely powerful as a combo, or that are particularly well-suited against your PCs. Compare the creatures and what you know about your PCs in advance, especially if the encounter is already a severe threat by the numbers. Page 16 has suggestions for what to do if you find a spike in difficulty during an encounter rather than in advance.
- **Watch for Overpowered Terrain:** As noted under Budgeting for Terrain, some features of the environment can increase the danger drastically. Consider your creature and the environment, and see whether the creature has a massive advantage compared to PCs in that terrain, such as a monster with powerful, long-range attacks when PCs are stuck at a distance. If so, you might want to adjust.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

One of the simplest and most exciting ways to create a dynamic encounter, even if the combat itself is not so difficult, is to add a secondary objective beyond simply defeating foes. Perhaps the villains are about to burn captives in a fire, and some of the PCs need to divert their efforts to avoid a pyrrhic victory. Encounters with a parallel objective that require PCs to take actions other than destroying foes can keep those foes around long enough to do interesting things without inflating their power level. It also makes PCs skilled in areas related to the side mission feel amazing when they handle it quickly or well.

Sometimes a secondary objective might present a time limit, like if the PCs need to prevent evidence from being burned, either by fighting quickly or actively protecting the documents. Another type of secondary objective relates to how the PCs engage in combat with the primary opposition. The PCs might need to use nonlethal attacks against guards who mistakenly believe the PCs are criminals, or they might need to prevent slippery scouts from retreating to alert others. Options like these highlight mobile characters like the monk. You could even create truly off-the-wall secondary objectives that require the PCs to lose the encounter in order to succeed. The PCs might

need to put up a believable fight but retreat and let foes steal their caravan in order to follow the foes back to their lair. Secondary objectives are a great way to highlight different abilities in combat and make for a memorable encounter, but—like all of these tactics—they can become annoying if overused.

OPPONENT SYNERGY

Most encounters assume that the PCs' opponents work together to oppose the PCs, but when groups of foes have been collaborating and fighting together for a long time, they can develop additional strategies. Consider giving each member of these tightly knit teams a reaction triggered by their allies' abilities, or another benefit they gain based on their allies' actions. Just as a team of PCs learns how to best position the rogue to flank enemies and minimize the harm they take from the wizard's *fireball* spell, NPCs can learn to complement each other's strategies and avoid interfering with each other. On the opposite end of the spectrum, opponents with poor coordination make the fight much easier for the PCs. Poor coordination between mindless creatures is common, and PCs can use clever tactics to run circles around these foes. When intelligent creatures accidentally (or deliberately) harm each other or pursue conflicting strategies, particularly if they engage in banter with each other as they fight, it can make for an amusing break in the typical rhythm of combat.

When taken to its extreme, synergy can represent the actions of a hive mind or a single massive creature. These synergistic components can be creatures, hazards, or both. For example, instead of representing a kraken the size of a warship as a single foe, you could represent each of its tentacles as an individual opponent. Perhaps the kraken can sacrifice actions it would otherwise use to crush PCs in its maw to use its tentacles more freely. In this case, you could model a field of tentacles as a complex hazard that mainly reacts to the PCs moving within it, but allow the kraken's head to act with a few tentacles directly.

MISDIRECTION

Sometimes, a bit of misdirection can add a lot of interest to an encounter, especially against offense-heavy groups. Rather than amping up the opposition to match the PCs' firepower and creating opponents whose own offenses are too powerful for the PCs' defenses, consider a little sleight of hand. For instance, a villain might have an illusory or disguised decoy target with just enough durability to take a few hits while the true villain is hiding nearby, ready to emerge and attack. Spells like *project image* can allow a foe to attack from a safer position, and *possession* grants the foe a disposable body unless the PCs brought along *spirit blast* or similar magic. Sometimes you can even hide the villain in plain sight: for instance, in an encounter with three goblins with similar-looking gear and an ogre, one of the goblins might be the biggest threat, but the PCs are likely to target the ogre first.

Care when setting up the battle map can also go a long way to misdirect your players—or at least avoid accidentally telegraphing what an encounter will be. For instance, if you always put out statue minis whenever there are statues in the room, the PCs might at first be overly suspicious of ordinary statues, but they will be more surprised later on when a statue turns out to be a construct than if you place minis only when the statue is actually a construct.

RECURRING VILLAINS

Not every villain dies the first time the PCs defeat them in combat. Some may escape, perhaps through teleportation, misdirection, or with other ploys. When a villain escapes and lives to fight the PCs again another day, it's good to have that foe learn from their past failures. In their next encounter with the PCs, give them additional minions, spells, or other defenses designed to counteract the strategies the PCs used against them previously. Even if the villain doesn't escape, they might have other tricks up their sleeves, rising again to oppose the PCs. They could well return later in the adventure—or they might come back immediately for a second battle, so long as there is a proper justification for doing so. For example, a previously living necromancer might rise again as an undead monstrosity bent upon destroying the PCs, or defeating an otherworldly villain's outer shell might reveal its terrible true form.

SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

The setup for a social encounter tends to be less detailed. For the NPCs involved, you'll just need statistics for their social skills, Perception, and Will. If you're making your own, you can find guidelines under Non-Combat Level on page 72. You also need to decide the objective or consequences of

the social encounter—what the PCs can achieve and what happens if they fail—and the form of the challenge. It might be a public debate, a private audience with a powerful person, or some kind of contest. Just like with combat encounters, think about the environment, with a particular eye toward the other people around. Is there a crowd the PCs can sway? Are they in an imposing, luxurious throne room or at a city gate? Is the atmosphere oppressive? Hopeful?

You might find the PCs' goal ends up being quite different from what you initially thought they would be. Fortunately, social encounters can be pretty adaptable. Thinking of their likely objective helps you construct the scene in your mind more easily but shouldn't limit you.

The basics of social encounters are on *Core Rulebook* page 494, and page 16 of this book has more advice.

TREASURE BY ENCOUNTER

The standard rules count treasure over the course of a level, rather than dividing it up by encounter. If you need to select treasure for a single encounter, such as in a sandbox game, you can use the table below. It takes the treasure budget for each level from Table 10–9 on page 509 of the *Core Rulebook* and breaks that down per encounter based on the encounter threat, similar to how XP varies by threat. The final column shows extra treasure you should award if you build an entire level this way. Unlike the standard table, this doesn't include items by item level, as the value doesn't cleanly break down for most single encounters. It's recommended you still give out those permanent items, but you'll need to borrow from other encounters' treasure to account for their value. Include encounters against creatures without treasure to account for this.

TABLE 1-3: TREASURE BY ENCOUNTER

Level	Total Treasure per Level	Low	Moderate	Severe	Extreme	Extra Treasure
1	175 gp	13 gp	18 gp	26 gp	35 gp	35 gp
2	300 gp	23 gp	30 gp	45 gp	60 gp	60 gp
3	500 gp	38 gp	50 gp	75 gp	100 gp	100 gp
4	850 gp	65 gp	85 gp	130 gp	170 gp	170 gp
5	1,350 gp	100 gp	135 gp	200 gp	270 gp	270 gp
6	2,000 gp	150 gp	200 gp	300 gp	400 gp	400 gp
7	2,900 gp	220 gp	290 gp	440 gp	580 gp	580 gp
8	4,000 gp	300 gp	400 gp	600 gp	800 gp	800 gp
9	5,700 gp	430 gp	570 gp	860 gp	1,140 gp	1,140 gp
10	8,000 gp	600 gp	800 gp	1,200 gp	1,600 gp	1,600 gp
11	11,500 gp	865 gp	1,150 gp	1,725 gp	2,300 gp	2,300 gp
12	16,500 gp	1,250 gp	1,650 gp	2,475 gp	3,300 gp	3,300 gp
13	25,000 gp	1,875 gp	2,500 gp	3,750 gp	5,000 gp	5,000 gp
14	36,500 gp	2,750 gp	3,650 gp	5,500 gp	7,300 gp	7,300 gp
15	54,500 gp	4,100 gp	5,450 gp	8,200 gp	10,900 gp	10,900 gp
16	82,500 gp	6,200 gp	8,250 gp	12,400 gp	16,500 gp	16,500 gp
17	128,000 gp	9,600 gp	12,800 gp	19,200 gp	25,600 gp	25,600 gp
18	208,000 gp	15,600 gp	20,800 gp	31,200 gp	41,600 gp	41,600 gp
19	355,000 gp	26,600 gp	35,500 gp	53,250 gp	71,000 gp	71,000 gp
20	490,000 gp	36,800 gp	49,000 gp	73,500 gp	98,000 gp	98,000 gp

DRAWING MAPS

Once you have an idea of the scope and the challenges in your adventure, the next step is to map out your adventure location, whether it's an underground dungeon, a desert ruin, or an undersea coral forest.

If you're worried that you don't have the kind of artistic mastery to create a map, don't be! Fundamentally, your maps should serve your purposes, framing the flow of action and story in a way that allows you to track the campaign's action and possibilities. No one expects you to create stunning maps that look as professional as those in published adventures. Just follow some best practices to make your maps both interesting and clear.

So, grab the following supplies and let's get started.

- Sheets of graph paper
- Scratch paper
- A pencil, preferably with H or 3H lead to leave a soft mark that's easy to erase
- An eraser
- Ink pens (optional)
- Ruler and compass (optional)

In all stages of mapmaking, don't be frustrated by missteps. You can always fix them later—the eraser is your friend! Drawing or erasing too much can weaken the paper, but you can always throw out a draft and start again. Remind yourself that this doesn't need to be the most exquisite piece of art ever made—all it needs to be is a tool for you to keep your story straight.

CREATE A LEGEND

Begin by making a list of the features your adventure site should contain—from geographic features to the types of rooms in a building to the monsters and traps the PC will face—and deciding the map's scale and orientation. The scale, orientation, and a key for any symbols you use to indicate features will go in the map's legend.

The scale for your adventure maps is usually the easiest to decide. If the map is meant to be usable for combat on a grid, where 1 inch equals 5 feet, you can assume each square of your graph paper equals 5 feet. If you are mapping a larger area, you could use each square to represent 10 feet or even more.

For the orientation, draw an arrow toward the north, write an "N" above the arrow's point, and you're done.

The key of the various details your map depicts is less predictable. Once you've decided what features your map should include—such as monsters, secret doors, and traps for a dungeon, or settlements and ruins for a regional map—think of a symbol to represent each feature on the map. You can also use the symbols in the sample map.

START SKETCHING

Now that you have your legend, it's time to start the map. Grab a pencil and begin sketching your adventure site.

If you're drawing a dungeon complex, start by detailing the corridors and rooms. If you're creating an outdoor area, begin with any bodies of water, rivers, and topography. No matter what you are drawing, do so with soft lines so you can easily erase—you might make mistakes, or you might have better ideas later in the process. As your map starts to take shape, start populating it with features matching the symbols you've designated in your map key.

Try not to overcomplicate your maps. Keeping your map as simple as possible will make sure important details stand out and aids in the map's legibility.

When sketching your maps—especially when drawing areas of wilderness or buildings—pull inspiration from the real world. An internet search will turn up reference images that can help when you're deciding the placement of trees and shapes of canyons and streams, or when you're replicating ancient, medieval, renaissance, or fantasy architecture. Basing your terrain and buildings on these references will help your creation seem more natural and believable.

When you draw dungeons and similar adventure sites, remember the size of the creatures that live in your complex, and give them enough room to live and move around. In other words, make sure the ancient black dragon fits through the entrance to its lair! Second, avoid empty rooms, and don't put rooms in just to have them. Each room should have a purpose. Maybe it's an abandoned purpose, but each time you create a chamber, ask yourself, "Why was this room built?" Lastly, avoid symmetrical or just plain dull structures. Part of the fun of exploring is being surprised by what you find, and needless symmetry and repetitive layouts can ruin that surprise.

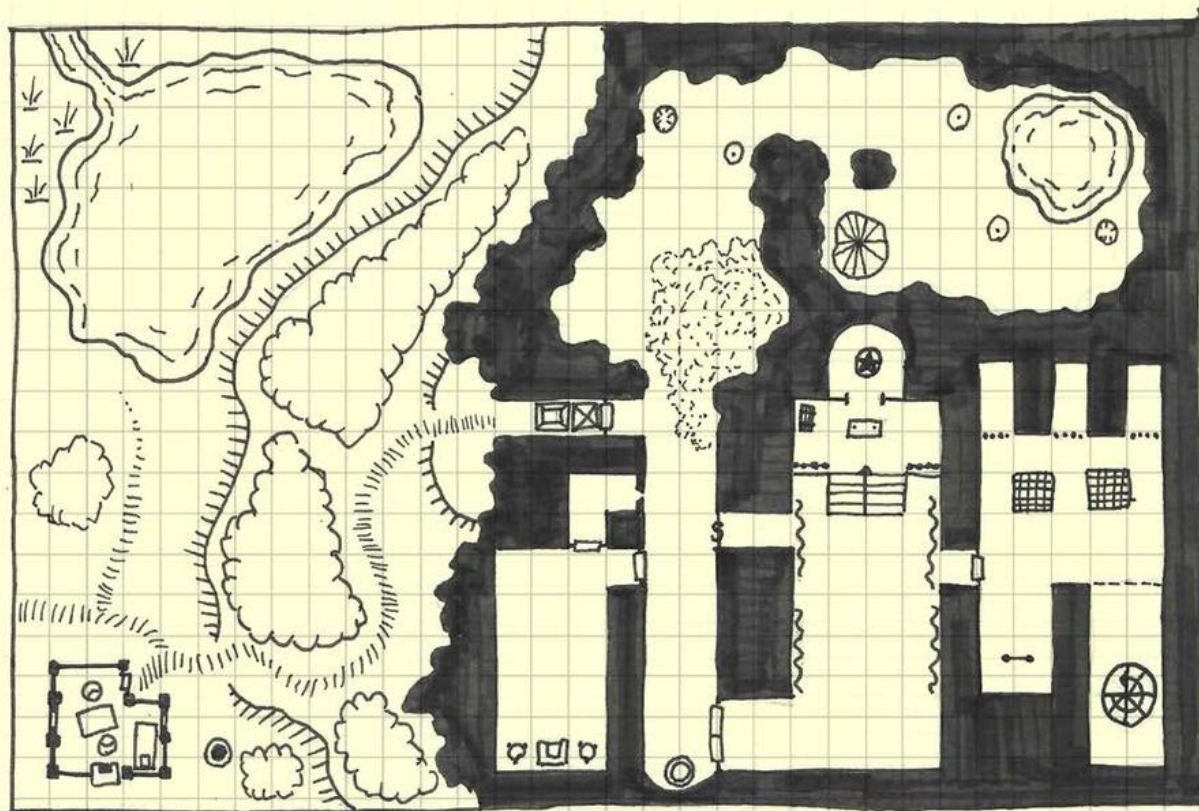
NUMBER ENCOUNTER AREAS

The next step is to number the encounter areas. You can then use that numbering system in your encounter notes. If you are designing multiple sites, or many levels of a massive dungeon, consider adding a letter designation before your numbering. The first area of your first site can be A1, while the first area of your next site can be B1, and so on.

ADD DEFINITION

With your map sketched and keyed, you can solidify your sketches with either darker pencil strokes or ink. This allows you to preserve your map so you can rerun the adventure or reuse the map for a different adventure. If you're feeling artistically inspired, you can color your map with colored pencils, marker, or paint.

SAMPLE MAP



Map Symbols

	Door		Covered Pit		Brazier
	Double Door		Pit		Statue
	Secret Door		Stairs (Arrow Leads Up)		Sinkhole
	Archway		Spiral Stairs (Arrow Leads Up)		Stalactite
	Portcullis or Bars		Curtain		Stalagmite
	Window		Railing		Rubble
	Arrow Slit		Table		Ledge
	Illusory Wall		Chair		Path
	Fireplace		Bed		Trees
	Ladder		Throne		Swamp
	Grate		Chest		
	Fountain				
	Altar				
	Pool				
	Well				

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CHAPTER 2: TOOLS

While the Core Rulebook provides all the tools you need to be a Game Master, you may want resources to create original game content, whether it be new items, unique creatures, or a sprawling new world for adventurers to explore.

This chapter provides a variety of tools to help you quickly and easily build your own elements for your game, as well as some special types of rules you can incorporate in your game, such as more hazards and strange magic items. This chapter is organized into the following sections.

- **Building Creatures** (page 56) demonstrates a top-down approach for quickly and easily constructing the creatures and NPCs you want or need for any possible situation in your game.
- **Building Hazards** (page 74) gives rules and advice for creating your own brand-new hazards.
- **Building Items** (page 82) teaches you how to create new pieces of treasure to delight your PCs.
- **Item Quirks** (page 86) introduces simple but memorable quirks that you can use to quickly personalize an item and make its nature seem just as unique and exciting as its special abilities.
- **Intelligent Items** (page 88) includes rules for creating items with a mind of their own that are characters in their own right, as well as several examples to get you started.
- **Cursed Items** (page 90) examines items that have a nasty drawback or might be altogether unpleasant. The section includes specific cursed items and a list of curses you can add to an existing item, akin to a rune.
- **Relics** (page 94) are special magic items that increase in power along with the PCs, and that you and your players work together to build and enhance.
- **Artifacts** (page 106) are the most powerful and story-rich magic items in the game, and can only be destroyed in a specific way.
- **Gems and Art Objects** (page 114) expands the diversity of monetary awards given to PCs and includes 100 sample art objects.
- **Afflictions** (page 116) provides a plethora of curses, diseases, and drugs for use in your games, as well as drug and addiction rules useful in creating your own afflictions.
- **Building Worlds** (page 122) explains how to go about building your own entire world or setting from scratch. This section leads into the next three, which provide tools to help you flesh out the finer details of specific parts of your game world.
- **Nations** (page 130) includes a system to quickly encapsulate a nation in a stat block that contains all the information you need.
- **Settlements** (page 132) covers everything from tiny villages to incredible metropolises. The section explains the settlement's role in a game and provides a system to describe a settlement in a stat block with all the important information.
- **Planes** (page 136) includes the various planar traits you can use to build your own planes, and explores all the planes of reality in the Age of Lost Omens setting as well.

It's up to you to determine how much of your game you want to customize. Many GMs use the default rules and creatures, and set their adventures on Golarion or another published game world. Other GMs devise and incorporate all-new creatures and places with strange themes that don't fit in the standard Pathfinder game or world. Unless you're building your entire game world from scratch, you can usually wait to implement any new rules creation until you think you'll need it for your next session.

BUILDING VERSUS MODIFYING

Many times, a small adjustment to an existing creature, item, adventure, or other part of the game can serve you just as well as building something brand new. Before you delve into creating your own new content, ask yourself a few questions. First, does something similar already exist? When answering this question, look beyond the surface level. Maybe you want a 5th-level clawed centipede creature that can make Attacks of Opportunity and that regenerates unless hit by acid or fire damage. It might not look very much like a troll on the surface, but the statistics for a troll are going to get you most or all the way there. Ask yourself what you'll need to change between your idea and the existing material. This will help you decide between using the original rule with minimal modification, using the original with adjustments, starting with the original as a framework to build your own, or just starting from scratch. Finally, ask yourself how much time you have to prepare the content, what overall impact you expect it to have in your campaign, and how important any discrepancies from existing material are to the core concept. The less important an element is to your game, or the less time you'll be using it at the table, the more likely you should modify something that already exists.

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BUILDING CREATURES

*Making your own creatures fleshes out your game world and lets you introduce concepts not yet available in published products like the *Bestiary* volumes. These guidelines help you customize creatures to your specifications and explore your imagination. From strange beasts to canny political rivals, you have the power to design creatures that fit the narrative needs of your story.*



Creatures aren't built the same way PCs are. The rules for building them are more flexible, and their statistics are based on benchmark final numbers rather than combining each individual modifier together. This is called top-down design, in which you consider the design process as a whole and select the details that reflect your intended result, rather than building statistics from the bottom up and hoping the finished creature matches your vision.

This guide provides a step-by-step process to build creatures, but as you get more comfortable with creature creation, you may prefer to use different methods. You could start with one ability you think is cool, or you might look to create a spellcaster of a certain type. There's no wrong starting place or wrong way to compile and present your creation; some GMs prefer to generate a stat block that is as similar to an official *Bestiary* entry as possible, while others prefer to compile just a brief set of notes.

DEVELOP THE CONCEPT

To begin making a creature, you should first come up with its concept. You likely already have the basic idea. As you add details to the general idea, taking notes can help keep your creature on track. Consider the parts of your creature you find most compelling and that you want to emphasize when the creature hits the table. For example, in the *Bestiary*, demons are creatures of sin, and are designed to have weaknesses against specific virtues that oppose them. Harpies enchant creatures by singing, represented by their centerpiece ability, Captivating Song. Note your creature's core aspects, and if you feel uncertain later, you can look back and ask yourself, "Does this emphasize a core aspect or not?"

Next, look at the creature's role in your game. Is it meant to be a combatant? A social creature? A trusted ally? Figuring this out will help you determine whether to give it strong combat abilities or to focus on skills, spells, and special abilities. Think about how the creature might behave if it's in a fight, if someone tries to talk to it, or if it's in a social situation. Does it work better alone or with allies? What sort of character should be best at facing it or be particularly weak against it?

Consider also the complexity of the creature. This matters most when you plan to use a large number of creatures of that type. If you'll use five at the same time, you'll want their turns to move swiftly and avoid complex special actions. A creature likely to face a group of PCs alone can have more abilities, and it might need a more versatile

BUILDING CREATURES OVERVIEW

This section details the creature-building process using the following steps.

1. Develop the Concept (page 56) Think about your creature, and make notes you can use in future steps.

2. Build the Stat Block Pick all the statistics for the creatures, going through the list below.

Level (page 58)

Alignment, Size, and Traits (page 58)

Ability Modifiers (page 59)

Perception and Senses (page 60)

Languages (page 60)

Skills (page 60)

Items, if necessary (page 61)

AC (page 61)

Saving Throws (page 62)

Hit Points (page 62)

Immunities, Weaknesses, and Resistances (page 63)

Speed (page 64)

Strikes, including their damage (page 64)

Spells, if necessary (page 65)

3. Design Abilities (page 67) Create the special abilities your creature can use.

4. Review Holistically (page 69) Step back, take stock of your creature as a whole, and tweak as needed.

TRAIT ABILITIES (PAGE 70)

This section provides the abilities conveyed by certain traits, such as demon, dragon, and undead. You'll also find abilities typical of creatures with those traits to help guide you as you plan your creatures.

DESIGNING NPCs (PAGE 72)

Sometimes you'll design a creature that's meant to have abilities or characteristics similar to those of a PC. Maybe you need a bold champion, a sly rogue master criminal, or a wizened druid elder for your game. You also might need a common baker, who has little combat ability but great skill with dough and an oven. This section provides ways you might modify aspects of the creature-building process to fit those needs.

set of defenses against PC tactics. Cut complexity as much as you can while retaining your desired theme.

Now, how do you want an encounter with this creature to feel? Should it be scary? Mobile? Confusing? A mystical duel or a knock-down, drag-out fight? What can you give your creature to convey those characteristics? Note that much of this feel will come from your choice of the creature's special abilities or spells, rather than its raw numbers.

With all this in mind, think about the specific abilities your creature should have. Take a few notes now, and get to the details later. You can use abilities from the *Bestiary* or feats in the *Core Rulebook*, adjusting as needed, to save yourself time. It helps to think of a creature that's similar to yours and see what makes it tick—and what you can steal from it. Maybe you can just reskin that creature (page 58), instead of making a new one from scratch.

Now that you understand your creature's concept, it's time to get to the statistics. Remember that you can always change your concept later on. Your creation might evolve and transform as you go, so be open to change and revisions.

UNDERSTANDING AND CHOOSING STATISTICS

Most of the statistics in this section use a scale of extreme, high, moderate, and low—some use terrible values as well.

Extreme: The creature is world class in this statistic and can challenge almost any character. Most creatures have no extreme statistics or only one extreme statistic, although some creatures might have additional extreme statistics and weaker related statistics elsewhere (a common example being a creature trading accuracy for extreme damage). Examples from the *Bestiary* include the succubus's Diplomacy and the lich's spell DC.

High: Extremely capable but not world class, the creature presents a challenge for most characters. Just about all creatures have at least one high value. Most combat-focused creatures have high AC and either a high attack bonus and high damage, or a merely moderate attack bonus but extreme damage. An ogre warrior's attack bonus and a kobold scout's Stealth are high values.

Moderate: A middle-of-the road statistic can cover anything unremarkable about the creature. Use this one often.

Low: The creature is actively bad at this. Choose these intentionally to represent the creature's weak points. Most creatures should have at least one low statistic; an example is the goblin pyro's Will save.

Terrible: Some statistics can dip even lower than low, to terrible. This indicates a truly awful statistic that still isn't game-breakingly bad. A spider's Intelligence is terrible, as is a dero stalker's Will save.

PUSH AND PULL

When it comes to statistics, a creature should be balanced overall. That means if you're giving a creature an extreme statistic, it should have some low or terrible statistics to compensate. For example, if you were making a creature extremely hard to hit by giving it an extreme AC, you'd likely give it lower saving throws or low HP. If a creature is great at spellcasting, it might need several low statistics to be a balanced challenge. There's no perfect system for making these decisions. If you've made a creature that has four high stats and nothing low, or vice-versa, take another look. A creature's strengths and weaknesses change the PCs' strategies for dealing with it, and that's what makes playing the game fun!

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RESKINNING A CREATURE

Sometimes you need a creature with abilities that are almost exactly the same as those of a published creature. In that case, it can be more efficient to simply “reskin” the old creature rather than design a new one—that is, to change the description but keep the abilities mostly the same. Occasionally reskinning requires small mechanical adjustments. For instance, a fire cat that has immunity to fire, an aura that deals fire damage, and the ability to light people on fire with its jaws to deal persistent fire damage could be reskinned as a caustic animate tree that has immunity to acid, an aura that deals acid damage, and branch attacks that smear acidic sap on a creature’s body when they hit, dealing persistent acid damage.

EXTREME INCREASES

At the higher levels of the game, PCs have more tools at their disposal, so the creatures they face need to hit back harder! At higher levels, give each creature more extreme statistics. Having one extreme statistic becomes typical around 11th level. A creature of 15th level or higher typically has two extreme statistics, and one of 20th level or higher should have three or four. Keep in mind that these should be relevant to the encounters you expect them to have—extreme social skills aren’t much use to a combat-focused creature. Be careful about giving multiple extreme statistics that are closely linked: a creature with extreme damage and Fortitude saves is one thing, but having an extreme attack bonus and extreme damage allows the creature to apply both extreme statistics to each attack.

LEVEL

For most creatures you build, their level depends on the level of the party who will encounter it. Look at other creatures you think are similar in power to yours to determine its level. Note that level represents a creature’s combat ability, so a creature that’s more social might have, for example, 3rd-level combat statistics and 6th-level skills but remain a 3rd-level creature. Most such creatures are NPCs; for more information on this distinction and how to use it, see Non-Combat Level on page 72.

Some abilities are hard for PCs to deal with at low levels. For instance, creatures that can fly and have ranged attacks should typically appear around 7th level, when PCs gain access to flight. Natural invisibility or at-will *invisibility* as an innate spell should come at around 6th level, when PCs are more likely to prepare *see invisibility* in lower-level spell slots, or 8th level, when some PCs get the Blind-Fight feat.

The tables in this chapter go up to 24th level—the highest-level extreme encounter a party might face.

ALIGNMENT, SIZE, AND TRAITS

Fill out the trait line of your creature’s stat block. The alignment can be whatever suits your story, though some types of creatures must be or tend to be certain alignments. Creatures can be whatever size you need them to be, though you seldom find Large creatures below 1st level, Huge creatures below 5th level, or Gargantuan creatures below 10th level. Generally, you don’t automatically adjust statistics for size, except for an exception to Strength modifiers for Large and bigger creatures, which you’ll find in Ability Modifiers on the next page.

Your creature will almost certainly have one of the following traits to define its type: aberration, animal, astral, beast, celestial, construct, dragon, elemental, ethereal, fey, fiend, fungus, giant, humanoid, monitor, ooze, plant, or undead. If you’re making a creature from an existing category of a type, such as demon, it also has that category as a trait. Creatures with a close



affinity to elements—air, earth, fire, and water—or types of energy—like acid, cold, and electricity—have those traits.

Some abilities typical of creatures with the traits listed above can be found in Trait Abilities on page 70. As with the other steps, looking at similar creatures will give you an idea of what traits to use.

Add any traits that have detailed rules attached to them, like amphibious, aquatic, incorporeal, mindless, and swarm. You can add traits related to the creature category, such as dinosaur or werecreature, but most of these traits are pretty self-evident in play. If at any point you realize during play that you didn't add a trait the creature really should have, you can usually apply it retroactively.

ABILITY MODIFIERS

Next, figure out your creature's ability modifiers, since these will suggest what their other statistics should be. You don't have to determine the exact numbers, but it's good to avoid creating creatures whose ability modifiers are at odds with their abilities, like creatures with a terrible Wisdom modifier and very high Perception. Most of the time, you'll just be using ability modifiers for untrained skills, so they're useful as a guide but not crucial.

Table 2-1 shows some benchmarks for your creatures. Use high for the creature's best ability modifiers, moderate for ones they're okay at, and low for the rest. If a creature has a truly bad ability, you can go as low as -5. That's the terrible range for ability modifiers, and doesn't really change by level. This is most common with animals, which have an Intelligence modifier of -4 (for dogs, dolphins, and such) or -5 (for more instinctual animals like spiders), and for mindless creatures, which have a -5 Intelligence modifier.

Few creatures use the extreme column. A powerful, dedicated spellcaster might use an extreme spellcasting statistic, or a preternaturally charming creature like a succubus or nymph might have an extreme Charisma modifier. However, the most common way extreme numbers are used is for really big, really strong creatures. This happens with only Large or larger creatures from 1st to 5th level, only Huge or larger creatures from 6th to 9th level, and only Gargantuan creatures from 10th to 15th level. Beyond that level, a creature doesn't gain an extreme Strength modifier from size alone.

TABLE 2-1: ABILITY MODIFIER SCALES

Level	Extreme	High	Moderate	Low
-1	—	+3	+2	+0
0	—	+3	+2	+0
1	+5	+4	+3	+1
2	+5	+4	+3	+1
3	+5	+4	+3	+1
4	+6	+5	+3	+2
5	+6	+5	+4	+2
6	+7	+5	+4	+2
7	+7	+6	+4	+2

BASE ROAD MAPS

You can use the following suggestions to set the baseline when creating your road map. For example, use brute for a big, tough creature like an ogre, and skirmisher for a darting enemy. Each entry is a starting point you can customize as you see fit. Any core statistic that isn't listed should typically use moderate numbers. You can set ability modifiers and add additional abilities as needed. To make a creature that resembles a character of a certain class, see Class Road maps on page 73.

Brute low Perception; high or extreme Str modifier, high to moderate Con modifier, low or lower Dex and mental modifiers; moderate or low AC; high Fortitude, low Reflex or Will or both; high HP; high attack bonus and high damage or moderate attack bonus and extreme damage

Magical Striker high attack and high damage; moderate to high spell DCs; either a scattering of innate spells or prepared or spontaneous spells up to half the creature's level (rounded up) minus 1

Skill Paragon high or extreme ability modifier matching its best skills; typically high Reflex or Will and low Fortitude; many skills at moderate or high and potentially one or two extreme skills; at least one special ability to use the creature's skills in combat

Skirmisher high Dex modifier; low Fortitude, high Reflex; higher Speed than typical

Sniper high Perception; high Dex modifier; low Fortitude, high Reflex; moderate to low HP; ranged Strikes have high attack bonus and damage or moderate attack bonus and extreme damage (melee Strikes are weaker)

Soldier high Str modifier; high to extreme AC; high Fortitude; high attack bonus and high damage; Attack of Opportunity or other tactical abilities

Spellcaster high or extreme modifier for the corresponding mental ability; low Fortitude, high Will; low HP; low attack bonus and moderate or low damage; high or extreme spell DCs; prepared or spontaneous spells up to half the creature's level (rounded up)

8	+7	+6	+4	+3
9	+7	+6	+4	+3
10	+8	+7	+5	+3
11	+8	+7	+5	+3
12	+8	+7	+5	+4
13	+9	+8	+5	+4
14	+9	+8	+5	+4
15	+9	+8	+6	+4
16	+10	+9	+6	+5
17	+10	+9	+6	+5
18	+10	+9	+6	+5
19	+11	+10	+6	+5
20	+11	+10	+7	+6
21	+11	+10	+7	+6
22	+11	+10	+8	+6
23	+11	+10	+8	+6
24	+13	+12	+9	+7

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CONVERTING FIRST EDITION CREATURES

If you're converting creatures from First Edition, you won't find a direct numerical conversion. Instead, use the original statistics to create your road map, giving a better AC to a creature that had a good AC in First Edition, and so on.

Here are the main areas of difference that you'll want to keep in mind for your conversion.

- Ability modifiers scale differently, so don't copy them over exactly. The highest modifiers tend not to get as high in Second Edition. You'll rarely see a +10 Strength modifier, for example. Creatures also tend to get better low statistics at higher levels than they used to, particularly for Dexterity and Wisdom. This is most evident in high-level First Edition creatures with awful Dexterity.
- Low-Intelligence creatures, particularly animals, tend to have more special actions than they would have in First Edition. This is to make encounters with them more dynamic and distinct. Compare dinosaurs between the editions for good examples.
- When converting spell-like abilities to innate spells, you might need to make some substitutions. Some spells will appear as heightened versions of spells (such as *greater dispel magic* now being heightened *dispel magic*), but others will require you to find something different. Also, don't feel like you need to keep every spell; focus on the most thematic and potent ones. The Spells section on page 65 has more advice on this subject.
- Damage reduction has been replaced with two options: resistance to all damage (possibly with exceptions), or more HP and a weakness. Immunities, Weaknesses, and Resistances on page 63 describes the distinction.
- If you want to convert spell resistance, you can give the creature a +1 status bonus to all saves against magic, or +2 if it had abnormally high spell resistance for its level.

PERCEPTION

Perception is a fairly straightforward statistic. Use Wisdom as a guide for setting it, and adjust to the high side if your creature has acute senses or extra training. If your creature has low Wisdom, for example, it would probably have a low Perception modifier, or moderate if it's supposed to be a great hunter. Don't make your creature's Perception higher just because it's often used for initiative; creatures with poor Perception could use a skill check for initiative instead, such as Stealth.

SENSES

Choose or design any special senses for your creature, such as low-light vision, darkvision, or scent. If you're making a sense from scratch, simply decide what it senses, whether it has a range limit, and whether it's precise or imprecise. For example, a sinspawn (*Bestiary* 297) has "sin scent (imprecise) 30 feet." This means it can smell creatures bearing its associated sin if they're within 30 feet, and the sense is imprecise—about as acute as human hearing.

TABLE 2-2: PERCEPTION

Level	Extreme	High	Moderate	Low	Terrible
-1	+9	+8	+5	+2	+0
0	+10	+9	+6	+3	+1
1	+11	+10	+7	+4	+2
2	+12	+11	+8	+5	+3
3	+14	+12	+9	+6	+4
4	+15	+14	+11	+8	+6
5	+17	+15	+12	+9	+7
6	+18	+17	+14	+11	+8
7	+20	+18	+15	+12	+10
8	+21	+19	+16	+13	+11
9	+23	+21	+18	+15	+12
10	+24	+22	+19	+16	+14
11	+26	+24	+21	+18	+15
12	+27	+25	+22	+19	+16
13	+29	+26	+23	+20	+18
14	+30	+28	+25	+22	+19
15	+32	+29	+26	+23	+20
16	+33	+30	+28	+25	+22
17	+35	+32	+29	+26	+23
18	+36	+33	+30	+27	+24
19	+38	+35	+32	+29	+26
20	+39	+36	+33	+30	+27
21	+41	+38	+35	+32	+28
22	+43	+39	+36	+33	+30
23	+44	+40	+37	+34	+31
24	+46	+42	+38	+36	+32

LANGUAGES

Think about what languages the creature would need to communicate with other creatures in its home. For instance, many intelligent undead speak Necril, and many creatures from the Darklands speak Undercommon. If you want your creature to be able to speak to the PCs, be sure it has Common; for a creature with no reason to speak the common tongue of your setting (such as most extraplanar creatures in a typical campaign), be sure it doesn't. Some creatures can understand language but can't vocalize; in this case, you can state that they can't speak any language. For creatures that need to be able to infiltrate and communicate wherever they go, you might give them *tongues* or a similar ability as a constant innate spell.

SKILLS

You have lots of flexibility in setting your creature's skills. Pick some skills you think are appropriate, and consider how good the creature is at them. High skills are roughly on par with a specialized PC of the creature's level, though they could be a little lower or higher. Most creatures have at least one high skill, but no more than three. The best skills should go with the best ability modifiers, and you might even want to estimate the creature's proficiency rank for these skills. Some skills can get a high bonus for free to fit the creature's theme, particularly Lore skills.

Most creatures don't have an extreme skill unless they are world class for their level, like a succubus's Diplomacy. Having an extreme skill is less impactful than an extreme AC or attack bonus, but still might warrant a sacrifice elsewhere, especially if the creature also has more high skills than usual. There's no need for terrible skill modifiers, since an untrained skill usually represents that.

TABLE 2-3: SKILLS

Level	Extreme	High	Moderate	Low
-1	+8	+5	+4	+2 to +1
0	+9	+6	+5	+3 to +2
1	+10	+7	+6	+4 to +3
2	+11	+8	+7	+5 to +4
3	+13	+10	+9	+7 to +5
4	+15	+12	+10	+8 to +7
5	+16	+13	+12	+10 to +8
6	+18	+15	+13	+11 to +9
7	+20	+17	+15	+13 to +11
8	+21	+18	+16	+14 to +12
9	+23	+20	+18	+16 to +13
10	+25	+22	+19	+17 to +15
11	+26	+23	+21	+19 to +16
12	+28	+25	+22	+20 to +17
13	+30	+27	+24	+22 to +19
14	+31	+28	+25	+23 to +20
15	+33	+30	+27	+25 to +21
16	+35	+32	+28	+26 to +23
17	+36	+33	+30	+28 to +24
18	+38	+35	+31	+29 to +25
19	+40	+37	+33	+31 to +27
20	+41	+38	+34	+32 to +28
21	+43	+40	+36	+34 to +29
22	+45	+42	+37	+35 to +31
23	+46	+43	+38	+36 to +32
24	+48	+45	+40	+38 to +33

SPECIAL MODIFIERS

You can also add special, thematic modifiers for certain skill uses. For instance, you might give a creature that secretes adhesive "Athletics +7 (+9 to Climb or Grab)." This special bonus should still remain at or below the extreme number, especially if it has a combat purpose like the Grab bonus above.

ITEMS

If you gave a creature gear equivalent to a PC, your PCs would gain a huge amount of treasure by defeating a large group of them. Using Table 2-4: Safe Items can help you avoid that. A creature can have a single permanent item of the listed level without issue. For example, if a 6th-level creature has a +1 *weapon*, that item's not worth so much that the PCs would be massively rich if they encountered many creatures of that type and sold everything they found. You can give a creature several lower-level items too. Just pay attention to your overall

IMPROVISING A CREATURE

As you get more experienced, you might find that you don't need to build some creatures in advance. In many cases, especially for simple creatures, you can just select values from the relevant tables on the fly and track its HP. When you do, track which value you used as it came up. For instance, let's say you're improvising a 2nd-level kobold soldier. When it's time for initiative, you decide it has moderate Perception and jot down "Per +8." Your group's fighter beats it at initiative and attacks. You decide the soldier has high AC—looking at Table 2-5, you see that's 18—and add this information to your note. The fighter's Strike hits, and you select the low end of high HP: 36. Well, now it's 25. Your note says "Per +8, AC 18, HP 25." If it gets to take a turn, you can give it a Strike then.

treasure as measured against the guidelines on pages 508–510 of the *Core Rulebook*. At the lowest levels, a creature can certainly have multiple level 0 items, even though normally a creature should have only one item of the level listed in the Safe Item Level column.

Specific creatures or NPCs have more leeway to break these guidelines because you can plan the rest of your adventure's loot around them. Also, giving a boss villain a powerful magic item makes the fight and its aftermath more interesting.

TABLE 2-4: SAFE ITEMS

Creature Level	Safe Item Level
3 or lower	0
4–5	1
6	2 (+1 <i>weapon</i>)
7	3
8	4 (+1 <i>striking weapon</i>)
9	5 (+1 <i>armor</i>)
10	6
11	7
12	8 (+1 <i>resilient armor</i>)
13	9
14	10 (+2 <i>striking weapon</i>)
15	11 (+2 <i>resilient armor</i>)
16	12 (+2 <i>greater striking weapon</i>)
17	13
18	14 (+2 <i>greater resilient armor</i>)
19	15
20	16 (+3 <i>greater striking weapon</i>)
21	17
22	18 (+3 <i>greater resilient armor</i>)
23	19 (+3 <i>major striking weapon</i>)
24	20 (+3 <i>major resilient armor</i>)

ARMOR CLASS

Because AC is one of the most important combat stats, you need to be more careful with setting this number for any creature you expect will end up in a fight. Low AC typically fits spellcasters, who compensate with their

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selection of powerful spells. Most creatures use high or moderate AC—high is comparable to what a PC fighter would have. Reserve extreme AC for a creature that is even better defended; these values are for creatures that have defenses similar in power to those of a champion or monk.

TABLE 2-5: ARMOR CLASS

Level	Extreme	High	Moderate	Low
-1	18	15	14	12
0	19	16	15	13
1	19	16	15	13
2	21	18	17	15
3	22	19	18	16
4	24	21	20	18
5	25	22	21	19
6	27	24	23	21
7	28	25	24	22
8	30	27	26	24
9	31	28	27	25
10	33	30	29	27
11	34	31	30	28
12	36	33	32	30
13	37	34	33	31
14	39	36	35	33
15	40	37	36	34
16	42	39	38	36
17	43	40	39	37
18	45	42	41	39
19	46	43	42	40
20	48	45	44	42
21	49	46	45	43
22	51	48	47	45
23	52	49	48	46
24	54	51	50	48

COMPENSATING WITH HP AND SAVES

You might adjust your creature's HP, AC, and saves in tandem. Almost no creature has great defenses in all areas, as such creatures often result in frustrating fights. A creature with higher AC might have fewer HP and weaker saves, and one that's easy to hit could have more HP and a strong Fortitude to compensate. This depends on the theme of the creature. An extreme AC might mean reducing the creature's HP to the next lowest category, or reducing its HP by a smaller amount and making another reduction elsewhere.

SAVING THROWS

You can often set saves quickly by assigning one high, one moderate, and one low modifier. Some creatures might vary from this, either because they have poor AC but better saves or because they should thematically have multiple good saves and compensate elsewhere. You have more flexibility with saves, and having one save off the listed number by 1 is rarely a big deal. Pay attention to the creature's Con, Dex, and Wis modifiers—these don't have to correspond to the creature's saves exactly, but should inform your choices.

Extreme saves often pair with extreme or high ability modifiers. Almost no creature should have more than one extreme save, even at high levels. Assign terrible saves to creatures that have a clear weak point—for example, a nearly immobile creature would have a terrible Reflex save.

TABLE 2-6: SAVING THROWS

Level	Extreme	High	Moderate	Low	Terrible
-1	+9	+8	+5	+2	+0
0	+10	+9	+6	+3	+1
1	+11	+10	+7	+4	+2
2	+12	+11	+8	+5	+3
3	+14	+12	+9	+6	+4
4	+15	+14	+11	+8	+6
5	+17	+15	+12	+9	+7
6	+18	+17	+14	+11	+8
7	+20	+18	+15	+12	+10
8	+21	+19	+16	+13	+11
9	+23	+21	+18	+15	+12
10	+24	+22	+19	+16	+14
11	+26	+24	+21	+18	+15
12	+27	+25	+22	+19	+16
13	+29	+26	+23	+20	+18
14	+30	+28	+25	+22	+19
15	+32	+29	+26	+23	+20
16	+33	+30	+28	+25	+22
17	+35	+32	+29	+26	+23
18	+36	+33	+30	+27	+24
19	+38	+35	+32	+29	+26
20	+39	+36	+33	+30	+27
21	+41	+38	+35	+32	+28
22	+43	+39	+36	+33	+30
23	+44	+40	+37	+34	+31
24	+46	+42	+38	+36	+32

HIT POINTS

Give a creature HP in the moderate range unless its theme strongly suggests it should use another range. Spellcasters, for example, often have low HP. Brutish creatures usually have high HP, compensating with lower AC, weaker saves, few tactical options, or other limitations. As mentioned in the Armor Class section above, you don't want a creature with extreme AC to have high HP too.

Hit Points are closely tied in with immunities, weaknesses, and resistances, so if your creature has any of those, look at that section before finalizing HP (page 63).

REGENERATION AND HEALING ABILITIES

Your creature might have regeneration, fast healing, or some other ability to heal itself. These healing abilities can greatly affect the flow of a fight. Regeneration or fast healing heals some number of hits each round—usually one to one and a half hits. To determine the number of Hit Points it should restore, look at the high damage value on Table 2-10: Strike Damage (page 65) and multiply that value by the number of hits healed. For instance, if the

high damage is 20, regeneration between 20 to 30 makes sense. The value should be higher if the regeneration is easy to overcome—and remember that most regeneration gets easier to overcome at higher levels. Also, you might want to decrease the creature's total HP by double its regeneration value. Fast healing follows the same rules, but because it can't prevent a creature's death and there isn't always have a way to deactivate it, you might want to give the creature more HP instead of fast healing to keep things simple.

If a creature can use an ability that heals it, that ability typically restores more HP since it costs actions. An at-will healing ability should be based on a *heal* spell 2 levels lower than the highest-level spell a creature of that level could ordinarily cast (for example, an 11th-level creature can typically cast up to 6th-level spells, so you would base its healing ability on a 4th-level *heal* spell). If the ability both deals damage and heals, use that same baseline scale from above but with *vampiric touch* instead of *heal*.

TABLE 2-7: HIT POINTS

Level	High	Moderate	Low
-1	9	8-7	6-5
0	20-17	16-14	13-11
1	26-24	21-19	16-14
2	40-36	32-28	25-21
3	59-53	48-42	37-31
4	78-72	63-57	48-42
5	97-91	78-72	59-53
6	123-115	99-91	75-67
7	148-140	119-111	90-82
8	173-165	139-131	105-97
9	198-190	159-151	120-112
10	223-215	179-171	135-127
11	248-240	199-191	150-142
12	273-265	219-211	165-157
13	298-290	239-231	180-172
14	323-315	259-251	195-187
15	348-340	279-271	210-202
16	373-365	299-291	225-217
17	398-390	319-311	240-232
18	423-415	339-331	255-247
19	448-440	359-351	270-262
20	473-465	379-371	285-277
21	505-495	405-395	305-295
22	544-532	436-424	329-317
23	581-569	466-454	351-339
24	633-617	508-492	383-367

IMMUNITIES, WEAKNESSES, AND RESISTANCES

If it's highly thematic for a creature to have an immunity, weakness, or resistance, consider adding it. Table 2-8 lists the ranges for weaknesses and resistances by level.

Immunities are generally reserved for creatures made of an unusual substance (like a fire elemental being

immune to fire). You can also give an immunity if a creature's biology or construction would logically cause it to be unaffected (like a mindless creature's immunity to mental effects).

If the creature should be hard to affect with something but the conditions above aren't true, give it a resistance instead. For instance, a giant octopus isn't actually made of cold water, so it wouldn't be immune to cold, but its life in the ocean depths make it resistant to cold. You'll typically use the lower end of the value on Table 2-8 for a broad resistance that applies to a wide range of effects, like "physical 5 (except silver)" and the higher end for something narrower, like a single damage type. A creature with a resistance, especially a broad resistance or a physical resistance, usually has fewer HP.

Giving your creature a weakness adds flavor to it and greatly rewards effective player tactics once your players identify the weakness. The weakness should apply to one damage type or phenomenon and use the high end of the scale. Creatures typically have at most one weakness. If a creature has a weakness, especially to something common, give it additional HP. The amount of additional HP might depend on how tough the creature should feel if the PCs don't exploit its weakness; a tough creature might have additional HP equal to quadruple the weakness value. A creature with a hard-to-exploit weakness might have additional HP equal to the weakness value or less.

TABLE 2-8: RESISTANCES AND WEAKNESSES

Level	Maximum	Minimum
-1	1	1
0	3	1
1	3	2
2	5	2
3	6	3
4	7	4
5	8	4
6	9	5
7	10	5
8	11	6
9	12	6
10	13	7
11	14	7
12	15	8
13	16	8
14	17	9
15	18	9
16	19	9
17	19	10
18	20	10
19	21	11
20	22	11
21	23	12
22	24	12
23	25	13
24	26	13

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The combination of more HP and a weakness has a different feel from standard HP with resistances. If the creature being an impervious tank really fits its theme, use a resistance with an exception, such as “physical 5 (except silver).” If, however, it makes more sense for normal hits to get through and the creature to simply have great staying power, use more HP and a weakness. Skeletons and zombies are a good example of the difference between these styles. Skeletons have resistances because they’re bony and hard to hurt. Zombies, on the other hand, have more HP and a weakness to slashing damage—they’re tougher, but their bodies aren’t built to deflect weapon attacks, and slashing attacks can rip them up quickly.

SPEED

Your creature’s Speed should be 25 feet if it moves like a human. Beyond that, you can set the Speed to whatever makes sense. Remember that the creature can move up to triple this number if it spends its whole turn moving, so if you want the PCs to be able to chase the creature, its Speed can be only so high. Creatures at higher levels need ways to deal with flying PCs, speedy PCs, and PCs with more efficient actions that let them engage and retreat more easily. This might mean adding a fly Speed, giving the creature ranged attacks, and so forth.

Creatures can have climb and swim Speeds even at low levels. While you can give your creature a fly Speed at those low levels, it’s better to wait until around 7th level (when PCs gain access to *fly*) to give your creature a fly Speed if it also has ranged attacks or another way to harry the PCs from a distance indefinitely.

STRIKES

When building your creature’s selection of Strikes, use the following sections to set the Strike’s attack bonus and damage. Give the attack all the normal traits if it’s a weapon; for unarmed attacks or weapons you invent, give whatever traits you feel are appropriate. Note that these traits might influence the damage you give the Strike.

You might want to make sure a creature has an unarmed attack if you think it’s likely to get disarmed. At 7th level and higher, PCs might have the ability to fly, which makes it more important for creatures to have decent ranged Strikes to make sure they aren’t totally hopeless against flying PCs (though they could instead have fast fly Speeds or something similar).

STRIKE ATTACK BONUS

Use a high attack bonus for combat creatures—fighter types—that also usually have high damage. A creature could have a higher attack bonus and lower damage, or vice versa (for instance, a moderate attack bonus and extreme damage might fit a creature that’s more like a barbarian), instead of having a poor statistic in another category. Spellcasters typically have poor attack bonuses, potentially in exchange for extreme spell DCs.

TABLE 2-9: STRIKE ATTACK BONUS

Level	Extreme	High	Moderate	Low
–1	+10	+8	+6	+4
0	+10	+8	+6	+4
1	+11	+9	+7	+5
2	+13	+11	+9	+7
3	+14	+12	+10	+8
4	+16	+14	+12	+9
5	+17	+15	+13	+11
6	+19	+17	+15	+12
7	+20	+18	+16	+13
8	+22	+20	+18	+15
9	+23	+21	+19	+16
10	+25	+23	+21	+17
11	+27	+24	+22	+19
12	+28	+26	+24	+20
13	+29	+27	+25	+21
14	+31	+29	+27	+23
15	+32	+30	+28	+24
16	+34	+32	+30	+25
17	+35	+33	+31	+27
18	+37	+35	+33	+28
19	+38	+36	+34	+29
20	+40	+38	+36	+31
21	+41	+39	+37	+32
22	+43	+41	+39	+33
23	+44	+42	+40	+35
24	+46	+44	+42	+36

STRIKE DAMAGE

Table 2–10 on the next page gives the damage a creature should deal with a single Strike. You might use a lower category if the creature has better accuracy, or a higher category if its accuracy is lower.

A creature that’s meant to be primarily a combat threat uses high damage for its melee Strikes, or moderate for melee Strikes that have the agile trait. Ranged attacks more typically use the moderate value, or even low. A creature that’s meant to be highly damaging uses the extreme damage values, but might then have a moderate attack bonus. As with most statistics, extreme damage is more likely at higher levels. You can also use the extreme value for special attacks that the creature can use only a limited number of times or under circumstances that aren’t likely to happen every round.

More versatile creatures, such as ones that can cast some spells and aren’t meant to primarily get their damage through Strikes, go one category lower: moderate for their main melee Strikes, low for agile and ranged Strikes. Spellcasters and other creatures that aren’t meant to be competent in a direct fight might use the low damage value, or even less if they completely don’t care about their Strikes.

On Table 2–10, you’ll find a damage expression (a die roll or rolls plus a flat modifier) you can use as is, or you can take the damage in parentheses and build your own damage expression to hit that number. If you do the latter,

remember that a d4 counts as 2.5 damage, a d6 as 3.5, a d8 as 4.5, a d10 as 5.5, and a d12 as 6.5. Usually a damage expression works best when roughly half the damage is from dice and half is from the flat modifier. If your creature deals special damage, like 1d6 fire from *flaming* attacks, that counts toward its total damage per Strike. Keep in mind that a creature using a weapon should have a damage value that feels right for that weapon. Extreme damage works well for two-handed weapons that uses d10s or d12s for damage. On the other hand, a dagger uses only d4s, so a dagger wielder would need something like sneak attack to deal extreme damage, or you might compensate for the dagger's lower damage per Strike by giving the creature the ability to attack more efficiently or use other tricks.

TABLE 2-10: STRIKE DAMAGE

Level	Extreme	High	Moderate	Low
-1	1d6+1 (4)	1d4+1 (3)	1d4 (3)	1d4 (2)
0	1d6+3 (6)	1d6+2 (5)	1d4+2 (4)	1d4+1 (3)
1	1d8+4 (8)	1d6+3 (6)	1d6+2 (5)	1d4+2 (4)
2	1d12+4 (11)	1d10+4 (9)	1d8+4 (8)	1d6+3 (6)
3	1d12+8 (15)	1d10+6 (12)	1d8+6 (10)	1d6+5 (8)
4	2d10+7 (18)	2d8+5 (14)	2d6+5 (12)	2d4+4 (9)
5	2d12+7 (20)	2d8+7 (16)	2d6+6 (13)	2d4+6 (11)
6	2d12+10 (23)	2d8+9 (18)	2d6+8 (15)	2d4+7 (12)
7	2d12+12 (25)	2d10+9 (20)	2d8+8 (17)	2d6+6 (13)
8	2d12+15 (28)	2d10+11 (22)	2d8+9 (18)	2d6+8 (15)
9	2d12+17 (30)	2d10+13 (24)	2d8+11 (20)	2d6+9 (16)
10	2d12+20 (33)	2d12+13 (26)	2d10+11 (22)	2d6+10 (17)
11	2d12+22 (35)	2d12+15 (28)	2d10+12 (23)	2d8+10 (19)
12	3d12+19 (38)	3d10+14 (30)	3d8+12 (25)	3d6+10 (20)
13	3d12+21 (40)	3d10+16 (32)	3d8+14 (27)	3d6+11 (21)
14	3d12+24 (43)	3d10+18 (34)	3d8+15 (28)	3d6+13 (23)
15	3d12+26 (45)	3d12+17 (36)	3d10+14 (30)	3d6+14 (24)
16	3d12+29 (48)	3d12+18 (37)	3d10+15 (31)	3d6+15 (25)
17	3d12+31 (50)	3d12+19 (38)	3d10+16 (32)	3d6+16 (26)
18	3d12+34 (53)	3d12+20 (40)	3d10+17 (33)	3d6+17 (27)
19	4d12+29 (55)	4d10+20 (42)	4d8+17 (35)	4d6+14 (28)
20	4d12+32 (58)	4d10+22 (44)	4d8+19 (37)	4d6+15 (29)
21	4d12+34 (60)	4d10+24 (46)	4d8+20 (38)	4d6+17 (31)
22	4d12+37 (63)	4d10+26 (48)	4d8+22 (40)	4d6+18 (32)
23	4d12+39 (65)	4d12+24 (50)	4d10+20 (42)	4d6+19 (33)
24	4d12+42 (68)	4d12+26 (52)	4d10+22 (44)	4d6+21 (35)

SPELLS

Your creature might have magical abilities that are best represented by spells. If you're making a highly spellcasting-themed creature, give it prepared or spontaneous spells. For a creature that has spells due to its magical nature, especially if that magic isn't its core focus, consider giving it some innate spells instead. How many spells you should give a creature depends on how you expect it to spend its actions in combat. If it's primarily going to be making Strikes, it might not have any spells, or it might just have a few to help it move around better or protect against certain types of magic.

MANUFACTURED WEAPONS

As noted in Items on page 61, most creatures have less treasure than PCs, so those that rely on manufactured weapons are significantly weaker if you don't adjust the weapons' damage to compensate. The method for determining Strike damage on page 64 abstracts over the sources of damage so you don't have to worry about adjusting the weapon's damage. If you do decide to calculate the weapon's damage, give your creature weapon specialization or greater weapon specialization much earlier than a PC would get it. You might also need to add sneak attack or similar abilities to make the creature deal more damage.

On the flip side, you might want to use a one-off creature as a source of a particularly high-level piece of treasure, such as a *magic weapon*. In these cases, you might want to make the attack bonus higher for the potency rune or the damage higher for a potent *striking* rune so the PCs feel the weapon's effect before they obtain it. This will make the treasure feel more powerful, since they've already been on the receiving end.

When choosing spells, lean hard into the creature's theme. While many PCs choose spells to cover a wide variety of situations, creatures are more evocative the more focused they are. Consider selecting about three-quarters of the spells based on relevance to the theme and the remainder for other things. However, make sure the spells aren't one note—selecting *fireball* for most of a creature's spell slots doesn't make for a compelling fire creature in the way a diverse selection of fire spells would.

When choosing spells, some spells won't be very useful if cast at an extremely low level compared to the creature's levels. Most notably, damaging spells drop off in usefulness for a creature that's expected to last only a single fight. A damaging spell 2 levels below the highest level a creature of that level can cast is still potentially useful, but beyond that, don't bother. Spells that have the incapacitation trait should be in the highest level slot if you want the creature to potentially get their full effect against PCs.

SPELL DC AND SPELL ATTACK ROLL

Set the creature's spell DC and spell attack roll using Table 2-11 on page 66. Most creatures use the same DC for all their spells, even if they have multiple types, such as a creature with both prepared spells and innate spells.

Use the high numbers for primary casters, and the moderate numbers for creatures that have some supplemental spells but are focused more on combat. At 15th level and higher, the extreme numbers become standard for spellcasters. A few creatures might use the extreme numbers at lower levels, but they tend to be highly specialized, with very weak defenses and Strikes. Secondary spellcasters can go up to high numbers if they're above 15th level and have offensive spells. There is no low value—the creature shouldn't have any spells in the first place if it would be that bad at using them!

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TABLE 2-11: SPELL DC AND SPELL ATTACK BONUS

Level	Extreme DC	Extreme Spell Attack Bonus	High DC	High Spell Attack Bonus	Moderate DC	Moderate Spell Attack Bonus
-1	19	+11	16	+8	13	+5
0	19	+11	16	+8	13	+5
1	20	+12	17	+9	14	+6
2	22	+14	18	+10	15	+7
3	23	+15	20	+12	17	+9
4	25	+17	21	+13	18	+10
5	26	+18	22	+14	19	+11
6	27	+19	24	+16	21	+13
7	29	+21	25	+17	22	+14
8	30	+22	26	+18	23	+15
9	32	+24	28	+20	25	+17
10	33	+25	29	+21	26	+18
11	34	+26	30	+22	27	+19
12	36	+28	32	+24	29	+21
13	37	+29	33	+25	30	+22
14	39	+31	34	+26	31	+23
15	40	+32	36	+28	33	+25
16	41	+33	37	+29	34	+26
17	43	+35	38	+30	35	+27
18	44	+36	40	+32	37	+29
19	46	+38	41	+33	38	+30
20	47	+39	42	+34	39	+31
21	48	+40	44	+36	41	+33
22	50	+42	45	+37	42	+34
23	51	+43	46	+38	43	+35
24	52	+44	48	+40	45	+37

PREPARED AND SPONTANEOUS SPELLS

Spell slots work best for creatures that are meant to play like PC spellcasters. Choose the magical tradition best suited to the creature. You aren't strictly limited to that tradition's spell list, though sticking close to it will make your creature's connection to that tradition more clear. The decision to use prepared or spontaneous spellcasting should align with the creature's theme: a spontaneous spellcaster fits well as a one-off creature, since spontaneous spellcasting grants greater flexibility in the middle of battle, while a prepared spellcaster makes for a great recurring character who can change their spells between appearances.

For a creature that can cast as many spells as a PC spellcaster, the highest spell level the creature can cast is half its level rounded up. It gets five cantrips. If the creature's level is odd, it gets two spell slots of the highest spell level (plus three spell slots of each lower level), or three spell slots of that level (plus four spell slots of each lower level). If its level is even, it gets three spell slots of the highest spell level (plus three spell slots of each lower level), or four spell slots of that level (plus four spell slots of each lower level).

Because creatures tend to be "on stage" for only a short time, you usually don't need to fill every spell slot. You can often fill just the top three levels of spells, pick cantrips, and slot in a few thematic backup spells in the fourth level down. For a recurring foe, you might give it a full complement.

INNATE SPELLS

Unlike prepared and spontaneous spells, innate spells can be of higher level than half the creature's level rounded up, and you can choose how often they're used—they can even be used at will or be constant effects. The most notable innate spells tend to be top-level ones that make a big impact but can be used only once, at-will spells that strongly reinforce the creature's theme, and constant spells that give it an ongoing benefit. A spell that's usable a limited number of times and falls at a lower level than the top tier is typically less likely to come up in combat; however, that's a great spot for utility and recovery spells, such as *dispel magic* or *restoration*.

Sometimes a strongly thematic innate spell is of a higher level than the creature would normally be able to cast, but it's so fitting that it belongs there. Be careful when doing this, as PCs might not have access to the appropriate countermeasures for the spell. This option works best for support, action denial, or battlefield control spells that change the odds of a fight without outright killing anyone, such as the succubus's *dominate* spell. These should make the fight more interesting, not end it. Keep the number of such spells very low, typically just one.

Though you can achieve all sorts of things with innate spells, always start with the theme and an idea of how you want the creature spending its actions. And though

you could give the creature a tool to counter every kind of PC attack or trick, remember that the players chose those options to enjoy using them, rather than to be constantly foiled by an effectively invincible creature.

RITUALS

Since rituals happen during downtime, giving them to a creature is usually a purely thematic choice. You can skip even looking at rituals in most cases. If you decide a creature needs to have a ritual for your story, add in the ritual whenever you need it.

DESIGN ABILITIES

In this step, you'll take the ideas for abilities you noted when you developed your concept and design these abilities for your creature. You can look at existing creature abilities from the *Bestiary* and feats from the *Core Rulebook* and use them as is or modify them to fit your needs.

When choosing abilities, think about both the number of abilities and the diversity of abilities. Having a large number of similar abilities can make the creature tougher to run, and it probably can't use them all anyway. Diversity of abilities gives the creature different ways to act in different situations, and helps guide you as the GM. For instance, a combat creature might have one ability it uses to get into position, another to use when it wants to focus damage on a single enemy, and a third that's more defensive.

BASICS OF ABILITY DESIGN

There are a few principles of ability construction that you'll want to keep in mind. Some guidance for specific types of abilities will come later, but these apply to everything.

- Respect the action economy.
- Make sure abilities are level appropriate.
- Avoid "invisible" abilities.

ACTION ECONOMY

Understanding a creature's action economy is key for making it work in play. Remember how short the lifespan of a typical combat creature is. Including a bunch of combat abilities might mean you spend time building actions the creature will never have time to use. Narrow your selections down to the smallest and most compelling set that makes sense. Also keep in mind that special actions will compete for time with any combat spells you gave the creature.

Reactions can help, giving the creature a way to act when it's not its turn. See Reactive Abilities on page 69 for advice on designing these tricky abilities.

Because of PC capabilities at higher levels, creatures at those levels should get more abilities that improve their action economy. For instance, creatures that grapple should have Improved Grab instead of Grab, Speeds should be higher, and many abilities that would have cost an action at a lower level should be free actions.

FOCUS SPELLS

Some creatures have focus spells, especially when those focus spells clearly fit a creature's theme. Simply give the creature the focus spells you like and between 1 and 3 Focus Points (you can also allow your creature to cast focus spells using spell slots). Use the same DC and spell attack roll as any other spell. A creature that has just 1 Focus Point is likely to cast a focus spell only once, unless it's a recurring enemy. If the creature has plenty of spells already, you might want to skip focus spells altogether, as they aren't as strong as top-level spell slots.

LEVEL APPROPRIATENESS

The effects of an ability should be appropriate to the creature's level. For damaging abilities, that means they follow the damage guidelines on page 68. For others, take a look at spells and feats with a similar effect to see if they're level appropriate. For instance, say you're considering giving a 6th-level creature the ability to teleport a short distance. *Dimension door* is comparable—that's a 4th-level spell, normally cast by a 7th-level or higher creature. That means 6th level probably isn't too low, but the creature shouldn't be able to use the ability more than once. You can also compare your creature to those in a *Bestiary* volume to see if the special abilities seem similar in power to those of other creatures of the same level.



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INVISIBLE ABILITIES

Avoid abilities that do nothing but change the creature's math, also known as "invisible abilities." These alter a creature's statistics in a way that's invisible to the players, which makes the creature less engaging because the players don't see it using its abilities in a tangible or evocative way. For example, an ability that allows a creature to use an action to increase its accuracy for the round with no outward sign (or worse, just grants a passive bonus to its accuracy) isn't that compelling, whereas one that increases its damage by lighting its arrows on fire is noticeable. These both work toward the same goal—dealing more damage this round—but one is far more memorable.

ACTIVE ABILITIES

Abilities a creature uses on its turn have the most flexibility and scope. You can use Table 2–11 to determine active ability DCs as well as spell DCs. You can have an ability use 1 to 3 actions as needed (or be a free action in rare cases) and use just about any type of tactic. Feats, spells, and existing creature abilities provide a wide variety of examples, so look for something similar to your idea to use as a basis.

Consider how you want your creature to spend its turns. Two-action activities pretty much define the creature's turn, and single actions work best for supplemental benefits or normal Strikes. And as you build out your idea of a creature's turn, don't forget about movement! A creature often needs to spend actions getting into position, especially early in a fight. This is especially challenging with melee-only creatures. You can give such creatures abilities similar to Sudden Charge or the deadly mantis's Leaping Grab.

Use 3-action abilities sparingly, as a creature can't use them if it is slowed or stunned—making a creature's coolest or most defining ability use up 3 actions might mean the creature never gets to use it. These activities should be reserved for abilities that include some movement (like Trample) or that the creature is likely to use before engaging in combat. Don't make an ability use 3 actions as a way to balance it—saying "This can be more powerful than other abilities because it is less likely to work," is a recipe for frustration if you've made a cool ability that's too hard or even impossible for the creature to use.

Be especially careful with activities when designing boss creatures. They're likely to get targeted with the PCs' most powerful detrimental effects, get grabbed, become slowed, or otherwise have their actions restricted. Bosses need to have solid options they can use with 1 or 2 actions. This lets them use their remaining actions to get away, use a simple ability, or otherwise keep the fight dynamic.

FREE ACTIONS

Use free actions that don't have triggers sparingly, and when you do, they should almost always be used for support or utility actions, not Strikes or movement. If you come up with a free action, consider whether it should be its own action or part of a combo, such as drawing a

weapon and attacking. In cases like the latter, you might be better off making a single action that allows the creature to draw a weapon and then Strike.

DAMAGE-DEALING ABILITIES

If a special action is a single action with only one target, you can often set damage using Table 2–10: Strike Damage on page 65. If it uses more than 1 action or requires setup in some way, it might deal higher damage than is typical; often, you can just use the extreme column in these cases.

For abilities that deal damage in an area, use Table 2–12 below. These numbers are based on a 2-action activity (e.g., most damaging spells). Single actions should deal much less damage. An ability that has another significant effect, like applying a condition, should deal less damage; for this, look at the damage for 2 or more levels lower, and judge which value would best match based on the severity of the additional effect. These abilities typically allow a basic saving throw. The table includes values for unlimited-use abilities (ones that can be used at-will) and limited-use ones (which can be used once or, like a Breath Weapon, once or twice but not on consecutive turns).

You can use the dice given or generate your own expression based on the damage in parentheses, as detailed in the Strike Damage section on page 64. If a high-level effect has a small area compared to similar abilities, you have it deal more damage.

TABLE 2-12: AREA DAMAGE

Level	Unlimited Use	Limited Use
–1	1d4 (2)	1d6 (4)
0	1d6 (4)	1d10 (6)
1	2d4 (5)	2d6 (7)
2	2d6 (7)	3d6 (11)
3	2d8 (9)	4d6 (14)
4	3d6 (11)	5d6 (18)
5	2d10 (12)	6d6 (21)
6	4d6 (14)	7d6 (25)
7	4d6 (15)	8d6 (28)
8	5d6 (17)	9d6 (32)
9	5d6 (18)	10d6 (35)
10	6d6 (20)	11d6 (39)
11	6d6 (21)	12d6 (42)
12	5d8 (23)	13d6 (46)
13	7d6 (24)	14d6 (49)
14	4d12 (26)	15d6 (53)
15	6d8 (27)	16d6 (56)
16	8d6 (28)	17d6 (60)
17	8d6 (29)	18d6 (63)
18	9d6 (30)	19d6 (67)
19	7d8 (32)	20d6 (70)
20	6d10 (33)	21d6 (74)
21	10d6 (35)	22d6 (77)
22	8d8 (36)	23d6 (81)
23	11d6 (38)	24d6 (84)
24	11d6 (39)	25d6 (88)

DEFENSIVE ABILITIES

Active offensive abilities usually fit creatures better than defensive abilities do. Save defense increases for creatures that are strongly defense-themed. For martial creatures, something as simple as a shield and Shield Block is usually plenty. Defensive abilities often run the risk of being invisible abilities. For examples of good defensive abilities, look at spells like *sanctuary* for ideas, or other spells that create interesting protective effects instead of just granting a bonus. If you do want to make a creature defensive, pick one defensive ability rather than several, since stacking up multiple defenses can make for a frustrating fight. One solid style of defensive ability is a mode switch, which causes the creature to get stronger defenses, but limits its attacks, spells, or other offensive options.

REACTIVE ABILITIES

Reactions and free actions with triggers can give a creature an impact outside its turn. This can make the fight more interesting, but may also be risky. It's tempting to give every creature a reaction, but that's not necessarily a good idea.

To decide whether your creature should have a reaction, first consider if the creature has the reflexes or insight to react well in the first place—for instance, an ogre doesn't have Attack of Opportunity because it's a big oaf. Oozes, constructs, and unintelligent creatures are less likely to have reactions than others for this reason.

Second, look at the complexity of the encounter your creature is likely to appear in. If you'll have a large number of creatures, skipping reactions can make the fight flow faster. A creature that's more likely to fight solo, on the other hand, might have a reaction to give it a way to continue to be dangerous amid an onslaught of attacks by the party.

When creating reactions, be careful with “gotcha” abilities—ones that punish players for making perfectly reasonable choices, for rolling poorly, and so on. If you include abilities like this, they need to reinforce the creature's core theme and the play style you want it to use in combat. For example, a creature that Strikes as a reaction when someone fails an attack roll will encourage PCs to use their actions on other tactics, rather than attacking multiple times each turn. Is that what you want? Is this dynamic essential for making the creature feel like it's supposed to? This isn't the type of ability you'd give to any old creature—only an incredible duelist or something similar.

Reactions should require something out of the ordinary to happen, or should be relatively weak if triggered by something ordinary. A reaction that triggers anytime someone tries to Strike a creature is likely to be perceived by the players as uninteresting because it's so predictable.

The best reactions should be telegraphed so when they happen, it makes sense to the players. Think of one of the core reactions of the game: Shield Block. The creature raises its shield—an obvious action the PCs can see—so when it blocks damage from an attack, that makes perfect sense. Similarly, if you made a crystalline creature, you might

have it build up sonic energy in a low thrum, so when it uses a reaction to release a burst of sonic energy when hit, the players can say, “Oh, I should have seen that coming.”

REACTION DAMAGE

Reactions should use lower damage, usually that of a moderate Strike. A reaction that deals area damage might deal low damage, though use such reactions with caution.

CONSTANT AND AUTOMATIC ABILITIES

Certain abilities shouldn't use any actions. Auras are a common constant ability, with frightful presence, an adult red dragon's dragon heat, and a xulgath's stench as notable examples. An aura needs a range, and if it needs a DC, you'll usually set it to the moderate spell DC unless the aura is one of the creature's defining concepts. For example, the xulgath's stench DC is significantly higher because the aura is such an iconic part of the creature.

Abilities the creature has no control over should be automatic. For example, the living wildfire fire elemental explodes into flame when it dies. It has no option not to, so this wouldn't make sense as a reaction or free action. Conversely, the Ferocity ability is a reaction because it requires the creature to give itself a last push to stay at 1 HP.

CONSTANT AND AUTOMATIC DAMAGE

Much like for reactions, damage for a constant ability should be pretty low. Usually this value is just below low Strike damage. Automatic abilities like the living wildfire's explosion ability tend to deal moderate Strike damage or unlimited-use area damage, and can deal even more if they happen only after the creature is dead or otherwise no longer presents a threat.

SKILL ABILITIES

A skilled creature might have abilities related to its skills. The skill feats in the *Core Rulebook* make for a good baseline. Avoid giving your creature skill abilities that won't matter in its interactions with PCs.

REVIEW HOLISTICALLY

Now it's time to look over your completed creature as a whole and make sure it's living up to your concept. Can it do everything you wanted? Does it fit its intended role? Is there anything you could add or anything superfluous you could cut to get the creature where it needs to be?

If this creature is built for combat, run through a few turns in your head. Does it still work decently if it gets slowed? Can it move into combat against the PCs effectively given their mobility options compared to its own? Does it have any abilities it'll never use given its other actions?

When you're satisfied with your creation, it's ready to hit the table. But that's not necessarily the end! If you notice issues during the game, you can fix them on the spot. It's your game, and you can freely change what you wrote if you think differently later on.

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TRAIT ABILITIES

Creatures with certain traits tend to have similar abilities to one another. Many of them appear here, to help you make your creatures match the theme of the trait when you build your own creatures.

ABERRATION

Senses usually darkvision

Languages usually Aklo

AEON

Traits LN, monitor

Languages Utopian and other planar languages; envisioning for true aeons

Weaknesses chaotic

Damage Attacks always deal additional lawful damage.

AIR

Languages usually Auran

Speed Many air creatures have fly Speeds.

ANGEL

Traits good (usually NG), celestial

Aura Angels each have a unique aura based on how they serve as messengers and how they deliver those messages.

Speed usually has a fly Speed

Rituals usually *angelic messenger*

ANIMAL

Traits N

Languages none

Int -4 or -5

ARCHON

Traits LG, celestial

Virtue Ability Archons each represent a specific virtue, like courage or hope, and have a special ability based on the virtue they represent.

ASTRAL

Senses darkvision

AZATA

Traits CG, celestial

Weaknesses cold iron, evil

Freedom Ability Azatas each represent a specific freedom, like free expression or free love, and have a special ability based on the freedom they represent.

BEAST

Int -3 or higher

CELESTIAL

Traits good

Senses darkvision

Languages Celestial

Saves often a +1 status bonus to all saves vs. magic

Weaknesses evil

Damage Attacks always deal additional good damage.

COLD

Immunities or **Resistances** cold

CONSTRUCT

Traits Many constructs lack minds and have the mindless trait.

Immunities bleed, death effects, diseased, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; if mindless, add mental

DAEMON

Traits NE, fiend

Languages Daemonic, telepathy 100 feet

Immunities death effects

Death Ability Daemons each represent a specific kind of death, like death by disease or starvation, and have a special ability based on the method of death they represent.

DEMON

Traits CE, fiend

Languages Abyssal, telepathy (usually 100 feet)

Weaknesses cold iron, good

HP typically high to account for their multiple weaknesses

Sin Vulnerability Demons each represent a specific sin, like envy or wrath, and have a special vulnerability based on the sin they represent. This should be something the PCs can exploit through their actions, which should then deal mental damage to the demon. The amount of damage should be based on how easy the vulnerability is to exploit.

Divine Innate Spells usually 5th-level *dimension door* and at-will 4th-level *dimension door*

Rituals usually *Abyssal pact*

Sin Ability Demons also have a special ability based on the sin they represent, which either makes them better embody the sin or instills that sin in others.

DEVIL

Traits LE, fiend

Languages Infernal, telepathy (usually 100 feet)

Immunities fire; **Resistances** physical (except silver), poison

Divine Innate Spells usually one 5th-level *dimension door* and at-will 4th-level *dimension door*

Rituals usually *Infernal pact*

Infernal Hierarchy Ability Devils each have an ability corresponding to the role they play in the infernal hierarchy, typically focused around control or being controlled, from the lowly lemure's Subservience to the gelugon's Tactician of Cocytus and the pit fiend's Devil Shaping.

DRAGON

Senses darkvision

Languages usually Draconic

Speed usually has a fly Speed

Breath Weapon Many dragons have the Breath Weapon ability, with specifics determined by the theme of the dragon.

EARTH

Perception often tremorsense

Languages usually Terran

Speed usually a burrow Speed

ELEMENTAL

Senses darkvision

Immunities bleed, paralyzed, poison, sleep

ETHEREAL

Senses darkvision

FEY

Senses low-light vision

Languages usually Aklo, Sylvan, or both

Weaknesses cold iron

FIEND

Traits evil

Senses darkvision

Saves often a +1 status bonus to all saves vs. magic

Weaknesses good

Damage Attacks always deal additional evil damage.

FIRE

Languages usually Ignan

Immunities fire; **Resistances** cold

FUNGUS

Traits fungi without minds have the mindless trait

Immunities if mindless, mental; **Weaknesses** sometimes slashing or fire

GIANT

Traits Large or bigger, humanoid

Senses low-light vision

Languages usually Jotun

HUMANOID

Int -3 or higher

INEVITABLE

Traits LN, aeon, monitor

Immunities death effects, disease, emotion, poison, unconscious

Damage Attacks always deal additional lawful damage.

MONITOR

Traits neither good nor evil

Senses darkvision

OOZE

Traits Almost all oozes lack minds and have the mindless trait.

Senses typically motion sense (*Bestiary* 254) and no vision

AC usually well below the low value for their level

HP usually around double

Immunities critical hits, precision, unconscious, often acid; if it has no vision, add visual effects; if mindless, add mental

PLANT

Traits plants without minds have the mindless trait

Senses usually low-light vision

Immunities if mindless, mental; **Weaknesses** sometimes fire

PROTEAN

Traits CN, monitor

Languages Protean

Weaknesses lawful; **Resistances** precision, protean anatomy

Protean Anatomy (*Bestiary* 237)

Damage Attacks always deal additional chaotic damage.

Divine Innate Spells constant *freedom of movement*

Change Shape

PSYCHOPOMP

Traits N, monitor

Senses lifesense (typically 60 feet)

Languages Requian

Immunities death effects, disease

Resistances negative, poison

Damage spirit touch (*Bestiary* 270)

RAKSHASA

Traits LE, fiend

Saves usually +2 status bonus to all saves vs. magic (+3 vs. divine magic)

Resistances physical (except piercing)

Change Shape

SPIRIT

Traits incorporeal, often undead

SWARM

Traits size based on the entire mass, usually Large or bigger

HP typically low; **Immunities** precision, swarm mind;

Weaknesses area damage, splash damage; **Resistances** physical, usually with one physical type having lower or no resistance

UNDEAD

Traits Almost all undead are evil. Ghostly undead have the incorporeal trait. Undead without minds, such as most zombies, have the mindless trait.

Senses darkvision

HP negative healing

Immunities death effects, disease, paralyze, poison, sleep (or unconscious if it never rests at all); if mindless, add mental

WATER

Languages usually Aquan

Speed usually has a swim Speed

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DESIGNING NPCs

Creatures that are meant to cleave closely to character classes or intended to represent people rather than monsters are NPCs. They might face more scrutiny around their mechanics than creatures, because a player can more directly compare their rogue to an NPC who acts like a rogue. That doesn't mean you have to build an NPC exactly like a PC, though.

You can build NPCs just like you would any other creatures. If an NPC should work like they have a class, use the class features and feats of a suitable class to pick abilities, and look at both the class's proficiencies and ability modifiers to determine how strong the NPC's statistics should be. Class Road Maps on page 73 has prebuilt road maps for the *Core Rulebook* classes to get you started.

If the NPC isn't meant to work like they have a class (a baker, for example), instead look at the NPC Gallery on pages 202–249. Compare your NPC to the existing ones to determine the NPC's level, and look for abilities that are similar to what yours should have. You can also create new abilities as needed to get the NPC's interactions with the PCs to express their theme and role in the story. These NPCs can be level –1 or level 0. Their capabilities are below those of PCs, and they should typically not use any class features or feats from PC classes. Creatures of these levels tend to be extremely simple, and usually you can just take one from the NPC Gallery and reskin it.

It's highly recommended that you select NPC skills using proficiency ranks as you would a PC, though you don't need to be precise about the number of skill increases you give the NPC. You can give them earlier access to expert, master, or legendary proficiency if they're a skill-based NPC, and better proficiency in narrow areas of expertise, like Engineering Lore for a tinker NPC.

NON-COMBAT LEVEL

An NPC's level should represent their combat prowess. A common person might not be a combat threat, even if they're important or highly skilled, and they consequently have a low level. However, that doesn't mean they can't present a challenge in other types of encounters. This is represented by a non-combat level, and tends to be specific to their area of expertise. For example, the barrister on page 232 of the NPC Gallery is a 4th-level creature in an encounter related to legal matters.

This can go the other way as well, such as with a powerful combat creature that's not suited to social settings. This is usually the case with creatures untrained in mental skills. You can improvise this as you run the game, or you can plan ahead if you have something particular in mind.

Building an NPC's non-combat level is pretty simple. Choose the level you want the NPC to be for the type of

challenge you have in mind, and use the skill numbers for that level—typically high or even extreme. Some challenges, such as social challenges, require the creature to have a high Perception and Will DC, so in those cases, you should increase those values as well. These should be set at the moderate or high values for the non-combat level, usually, depending on how adept you want the NPC to be.

The Experience Points gained for besting an NPC depend on how the party overcame them, because XP comes from overcoming a specific challenge. If the PCs defeat the NPC in a non-combat setting of the NPC's specialty, the party gets XP based on the NPC's non-combat level. If they just beat the NPC up, the XP would be based on the NPC's creature level. Quite often, that means 0 XP and failure at the PCs' objective; for instance, during a baking contest, if the PCs murder the other baker, not only would they be disqualified, but they would likely be apprehended for their crime.

PC-STYLE BUILD

If you do choose to build an NPC fully using the PC rules, your NPC should generally end up being an appropriate challenge as a creature of their level. They will likely have lower statistics in some areas than if you had built them using the creature rules, but more options due to their full complement of feats and class features. This is best saved for important, recurring NPCs, especially if they're meant to engage in social or exploration endeavors rather than just battles.

There are still some considerations and shortcuts that can expedite the process while ensuring the NPC works as you intend.

- The creature's treasure should follow the Treasure for New Characters rules on page 510 of the *Core Rulebook*. You'll need to account for this in your campaign's overall treasure. You might even want to give the NPC a higher-level item appropriate as a treasure allotment for the level.
- You can expedite ability score generation by making the starting ability modifiers add up to +9, with no more than one modifier at +4 (and typically no more than one negative modifier). You can skip adding a background if you do this, but you might want to give the creature two skills, which includes one Lore skill, to represent the skills granted by a background.
- It's not necessary to assign every skill feat, particularly for a higher-level NPC. You can just pick the most emblematic ones and gloss over the rest.
- For general feats, Incredible Initiative and Toughness make good choices.
- Most of the guidelines about choosing spells still apply, though you might want a few more utility spells that deal with non-combat challenges, particularly in low-level slots.

CLASS ROAD MAPS

You can use these suggestions when creating your road map to emulate a PC class, customizing as you see fit. You'll still need to look through the class to pick feats, weapons, and the like. Any statistic that isn't specifically listed can use moderate numbers.

Alchemist low Perception; high Crafting; high Int, moderate or better Dex or Str; low to moderate HP; moderate attack with bombs; infused alchemical items, Quick Bomber if a bomber alchemist, a few other alchemist abilities; it's usually easier to give the alchemist its bomb items rather than use Quick Alchemy on the spot.

Barbarian high Athletics; high Str, high to moderate Con; high AC; high Fortitude; high HP; moderate attack and extreme damage (when raging); Rage and a few barbarian abilities

Bard moderate Occultism, high Performance, high Charisma-based skills; high Cha; low Fortitude, moderate to high Will; low to moderate HP; low accuracy; high to extreme spell DC; spontaneous occult spellcasting as a bard of their level; composition spells

Champion low Perception; moderate Religion; high Str or Dex, moderate Cha; extreme AC; low Reflex; moderate attack and high damage; champion's reaction, devotion spells, Shield Block

Cleric (Cloistered Cleric) high Perception; high Religion, moderate or high skill themed to deity; low AC; high Wis; low Fortitude, high Will; low to moderate HP; low accuracy; high to extreme spell DC; prepared divine spellcasting as a cleric of their level; divine font; domain spells

Cleric (Warpriest) moderate Perception; moderate Religion, moderate or high skill themed to deity; high Str, moderate Wis; high AC; low Reflex, high Will; high spell DC; prepared divine spellcasting as a cleric of their level; divine font, Shield Block

Druid high Perception; high Nature, moderate or high skill from order; high Wis; high Will; low to moderate HP; low accuracy; high to extreme spell DC; prepared primal spellcasting as a druid of their level; order ability and order spell for their order; Shield Block; add an animal to the encounter for animal order

Fighter high Acrobatics or Athletics; high Str or Dex; high AC; low Will; high attack and high damage; Attack of Opportunity, Shield Block, a few fighter abilities

Monk high Acrobatics, Athletics, or both; high Str or Dex, moderate Wis; high or extreme AC; moderate attack and high damage; Flurry of Blows, a few monk abilities (possibly including ki spells)

Ranger high Perception; moderate Nature and moderate to high Survival; high Str or Dex; high AC; moderate attack and high damage (or for a simpler ranger, remove Hunt Prey and just use high attack and high damage); a few ranger abilities

Rogue high Perception; high Dex (or key ability score for a specific rogue's racket); high Stealth and Thievery, plus more skills than usual; high AC; low Fortitude, high Reflex; low to moderate HP; moderate attack and low to moderate damage before sneak attack plus high or extreme damage with sneak attack; sneak attack, a few rogue abilities

Sorcerer low Perception; moderate bloodline skills and high Charisma-based bloodline skills; high Cha; low AC; low Fortitude; low HP; low accuracy; high to extreme spell DC; spontaneous spellcasting of a tradition based on bloodline as a sorcerer of their level; bloodline spells

Wizard low Perception; high Arcana; high Int; low AC; low Fortitude; low HP; low accuracy; high to extreme spell DC; prepared arcane spellcasting as a wizard of their level; Drain Bonded Item, school spells and additional slots for a specialist (or additional uses of Drain Bonded Item for a universalist)

CLASS ABILITIES

You don't need to give an NPC all the abilities from its class—especially those that just alter numbers. The following abilities are good quick choices that make for more interesting encounters.

Alchemist Feats 1st: Quick Bomber; 6th: Debilitating Bomb; 8th: Sticky Bomb; 10th: Expanded Splash, Greater Debilitating Bomb; 14th: True Debilitating Bomb; 18th: Miracle Worker

Barbarian instinct ability and related feats, raging resistance; Feats 1st: Raging Intimidation; 2nd: No Escape, Shake it Off; 4th: Fast Movement, Swipe; 6th: Attack of Opportunity, Cleave; 8th: Sudden Leap; 10th: Come and Get Me, Knockback, Terrifying Howl; 14th: Awesome Blow, Whirlwind Strike; 18th: Vicious Evisceration

Bard muse feats; Feats 4th: Melodious Spell; 6th: Dirge of Doom, Steady Spellcasting; 10th: Quickened Casting; 14th: Allegro, Soothing Ballad; 16th: Effortless Concentration; 20th: Fatal Aria

Champion divine ally and related feats, divine smite, exalt, feats based on cause; Feats 1st: Deity's Domain; 2nd: Divine Grace; 4th: Aura of Courage, Mercy; 6th: Attack of Opportunity; 8th: Greater Mercy; 12th: Aura of Faith; 14th: Aura of Righteousness, Divine Reflexes; 18th: Celestial Form, Ultimate Mercy

Cleric Feats 1st: Harming Hands, Healing Hands; 2nd: Sap Life, Turn Undead; 4th: Command Undead, Necrotic Infusion; 6th: Divine Weapon, Selective Energy; 8th: Channeled Succor; 12th: Defensive Recovery; 14th: Fast Channel; 16th: Eternal Bane, Eternal Blessing

Druid order feats; Feats 6th: Steady Spellcasting; 8th: Fey Caller (only the added spells); 10th: Overwhelming Energy; 12th: Primal Summons; 16th: Effortless Concentration; 20th: Leyline Conduit

Fighter bravery, feats associated with a combat style; Feats 1st: Power Attack, Sudden Charge; 2nd: Intimidating Strike, Lunge; 4th: Knockdown, Swipe; 6th: Shatter Defenses; 8th: Blind-Fight, Felling Strike, Sudden Leap; 10th: Certain Strike, Combat Reflexes, Disruptive Stance, Fearsome Brute; 12th: Spring Attack; 14th: Determination, Whirlwind Strike; 20th: Weapon Supremacy

Monk metal strikes, mystic strikes, perfected form, stance and related feats; Feats 1st: Ki Rush, Ki Strike; 2nd: Crushing Grab, Stunning Fist; 4th: Deflect Arrow, Flying Kick; 6th: Abundant Step, Ki Blast, Whirling Throw; 8th: Wall Run; 10th: Winding Flow; 16th: Quivering Palm, Shattering Strike; 18th: Diamond Fists, Swift River; 20th: Enduring Quickness, Impossible Techniques

Ranger Hunt Prey, hunter's edge, nature's edge, masterful hunter, swift prey, companion or combat style and related feats; Feats 2nd: Quick Draw, Wild Empathy; 4th: Scout's Warning; 6th: Skirmish Strike; 8th: Blind-Fight, Warden's Boon; 10th: Camouflage; 14th: Sense the Unseen; 18th: Shadow Hunter; 20th: Ultimate Skirmisher

Rogue surprise attack, deny advantage, debilitating strike, master strike, rogue's racket and related feats; Feats 1st: Nimble Dodge; 2nd: Mobility, Quick Draw; 4th: Scout's Warning; 6th: Gang Up, Skirmish Strike, Twist the Knife; 8th: Blind-Fight, Opportune Backstab; 10th: Sneak Savant; 12th: Fantastic Leap, Spring from the Shadows; 14th: Sense the Unseen; 16th: Dispelling Slice, Perfect Distraction; 20th: Hidden Paragon, Reactive Distraction

Sorcerer bloodline and related feats; Feats 1st: Counterspell, Dangerous Sorcery; 4th: Bespell Weapon; 6th: Steady Spellcasting; 10th: Overwhelming Energy, Quickened Casting; 16th: Effortless Concentration; 20th: Metamagic Mastery

Wizard school and related feats; Feats 1st: Counterspell; 4th: Bespell Weapon; 6th: Steady Spellcasting; 10th: Overwhelming Energy, Quickened Casting; 12th: Clever Counterspell; 14th: Reflect Spell; 16th: Effortless Concentration; 18th: Infinite Possibilities; 20th: Metamagic Mastery, Spell Combination

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BUILDING HAZARDS

Building hazards designed for your game allows you to customize them to match your story, location, and needs, as well as to surprise the other players at every turn. There's no wrong way to create a hazard, but this guide presents the information in the order you might see it in a hazard stat block.

CONCEPT

The first thing you'll need is a concept for your hazard. What level is your hazard? Will it be simple or complex? Is it a trap, a haunt, an environmental hazard, or something else? If it's a trap, is it mechanical, magical, or both? This is a good time to brainstorm the hazard's name and description, as this will help you decide how the hazard can be disabled.

The following information builds on concepts from Building Creatures, which starts on page 56.

HAZARD TYPES

The three main types of hazards are traps, environmental hazards, and haunts.

Traps are usually built or placed, though they can also form accidentally, such as if a magic portal, through millennia of disuse,

malfunctions as its magic warps. Mechanical traps always have some physical component, whereas purely magical traps typically don't. Magical traps can usually be counteracted by *dispel magic*, and those without a listed proficiency rank for Stealth can be found using *detect magic*. Thievery is the most common skill used to disable traps.

Environmental hazards are either living things, like dangerous spores and molds, or simply features of the terrain or environment, like avalanches or rockslides. While they are always physical, some environmental hazards can't reasonably be attacked or damaged, such as a cloud of poisonous gas or a patch of quicksand. Survival is the most common skill used to disable environmental hazards.

Haunts are spiritual hazards, usually formed when the spiritual essence of a location is imprinted with the instincts and emotions from a living being's demise. Because haunts lack matter, they rarely involve a physical component, and when they do, that component is generally incorporeal or might even be damaged only by positive energy. The skills and options used to disable haunts vary, though using Religion for an exorcism is common. However, even with a successful check to disable a haunt, it can reoccur until its unfinished business is resolved. Typically, successfully disabling or enduring a haunt provides clues to determine what it would take to lay it to rest permanently.

UNDERSTANDING AND CHOOSING STATISTICS

Much like for creatures, hazard statistics can be extreme, high, or low (hazards don't need as much granularity, so they usually don't have moderate or terrible values for their statistics). While they are defined in creature creation, when building a hazard, you'll use the values slightly differently.

Extreme: While extreme values remain world-class statistics that are extremely difficult to meet or exceed, unlike with monsters, almost all hazards have one extreme statistic because hazards normally activate only if they have gone unnoticed or if someone critically failed to disable them. Does it have an extreme Stealth DC that makes it incredibly hard to find, an extreme Disable DC that makes it perilous to disable, or an extreme save DC that makes it deadly in the event it triggers? These are the most common choices, as each affects a different phase of encountering the hazard.



High: This is a capable level, and can generally serve as a baseline value; this value for hazards covers what would be the high and moderate ranges for creatures.

Low: If a hazard has a weakness, like a poor Reflex save for a bulky mechanical trap or an easy DC to disable for a hard-to-find trap, it usually has a low value. If you need something even lower, use a terrible value from Building Creatures (pages 56–73), or just an incredibly low value like the *Armageddon orb*'s Stealth (*Core Rulebook* 526).

STEALTH AND DISABLE

When determining a hazard's combat statistics, first decide how the hazard can be located and how hard it is to disable. A hazard where the main challenge is how difficult it is to find, like the *Core Rulebook*'s hidden pit, might have a very different effect for its level than a hazard out in plain sight, daring a PC to try to disable it, like the *Armageddon orb*.

TABLE 2-13: STEALTH AND DISABLE DCs

Level	Extreme	High	Low
-1	18	15	12 to 11
0	19	16	13 to 12
1	20	17	14 to 13
2	21	18	15 to 14
3	23	20	17 to 15
4	25	22	18 to 17
5	26	23	20 to 18
6	28	25	21 to 19
7	30	27	23 to 21
8	31	28	24 to 22
9	33	30	26 to 23
10	35	32	27 to 25
11	36	33	29 to 26
12	38	35	30 to 27
13	40	37	32 to 29
14	41	38	33 to 30
15	43	40	35 to 31
16	45	42	36 to 33
17	46	43	38 to 34
18	48	45	39 to 35
19	50	47	41 to 37
20	51	48	42 to 38
21	53	50	44 to 39
22	55	52	45 to 41
23	56	53	46 to 42
24	58	55	48 to 43

When deciding how your hazard is disabled, come up with a narrative description of how it would happen, which will inform which methods and skills disable the hazard. You'll need to decide the proficiency rank necessary to find the hazard as well as disable it with each method. Remember, a hazard without a listed rank next to its Stealth DC is obvious enough that creatures can find it without Searching, and magical hazards without a listed rank are not normally protected against *detect magic*. Most hazards built

by intelligent creatures are concealed have at least a trained rank. Table 2-14 indicates the high and moderate proficiency requirements by level; you can use lower proficiency ranks than the ones listed, and if you use the high rank, consider a secondary, perhaps less-efficient method to disable the hazard using a lower rank. For instance, the bloodthirsty urge haunt in the *Core Rulebook* can be disabled with master Religion, or by a higher DC with expert Diplomacy.

If you need a Stealth modifier for a complex hazard, just subtract 10 from the listed DC.

TABLE 2-14: MINIMUM PROFICIENCY

Levels	High	Moderate
0 or lower	Untrained	Untrained
1-4	Trained (expert for Perception)	Trained
5-8	Expert	Trained
9-18	Master	Expert
19 or higher	Legendary	Master

DEFENSES

If there's a physical component that a character could break, you'll need to determine the hazard's AC, Fortitude save, and Reflex save, using the extreme, high, and low values (preceded by E, H, or L on the table) as well as its Hardness, HP, and Broken Threshold (BT). When building a purely magical or formless hazard, you can skip this section.

TABLE 2-15: DEFENSES

Level	EAC	HAC	LAC	E Save	H Save	L Save	Hardness	HP*
-1	18	15	12	+9	+8	+2	2-4	11-13
0	19	16	13	+10	+9	+3	3-5	15-17
1	19	16	13	+11	+10	+4	5-7	23-25
2	21	18	15	+12	+11	+5	7-9	30-34
3	22	19	16	+14	+12	+6	10-12	42-46
4	24	21	18	+15	+14	+8	11-13	46-50
5	25	22	19	+17	+15	+9	12-14	50-54
6	27	24	21	+18	+17	+11	13-15	54-58
7	28	25	22	+20	+18	+12	14-16	58-62
8	30	27	24	+21	+19	+13	15-17	62-66
9	31	28	25	+23	+21	+15	16-18	66-70
10	33	30	27	+24	+22	+16	17-19	70-74
11	34	31	28	+26	+24	+18	19-21	78-82
12	36	33	30	+27	+25	+19	20-22	82-86
13	37	34	31	+29	+26	+20	21-23	86-90
14	39	36	33	+30	+28	+22	22-24	90-94
15	40	37	34	+32	+29	+23	23-25	94-98
16	42	39	36	+33	+30	+25	25-27	101-107
17	43	40	37	+35	+32	+26	27-29	109-115
18	45	42	39	+36	+33	+27	29-31	117-123
19	46	43	40	+38	+35	+29	31-33	125-131
20	48	45	42	+39	+36	+30	33-35	133-139
21	49	46	43	+41	+38	+32	36-38	144-152
22	51	48	45	+43	+39	+33	39-41	156-164
23	52	49	46	+44	+40	+34	44-46	168-176
24	54	51	48	+46	+42	+36	46-50	180-188

* The Broken Threshold is usually half the hazard's HP.

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Some hazards, even high-level ones, don't make sense with a high Hardness value. In those cases, you can skip the Hardness and use the HP values from table 2-7: Hit Points on page 63. Especially for complex hazards, you might want to divide the durability over multiple sections, located in different positions, to encourage teamwork and mobility.

OFFENSE

Almost all hazards need an attack bonus or a save DC, and hazards that deal damage need to list a damage value. Simple hazards deal about twice as much damage as complex hazards and have an attack bonus even higher than the extreme attack bonus for a creature (abbreviated as S. Atk in Table 2-16: Offense). Complex hazards usually have attack bonuses akin to a high attack bonus for a creature (abbreviated as C. Atk in Table 2-16). You can adjust them further using Table 2-9: Attack Bonus on page 64 if your hazard needs it. Simple hazard DCs aren't as high for their level as their attack bonuses are, since effects with DCs usually have some effect even on a successful saving throw; use the EDC and HDC columns for extreme and hard DCs on Table 2-16: Offense below.

The damage columns on the table give a damage expression you can use, followed by the average damage in parentheses. If you want to make your own damage expression, remember that average damage is 2.5 for a d4, 3.5 for a d6, 4.5 for a d8, 5.5 for a d10, and 6.5 for a d12.

TABLE 2-16: OFFENSE

Level	S. Atk	C. Atk	Simple Dmg	Complex Dmg	EDC	HDC
-1	+10	+8	2d4+1 (6)	1d4+1 (3)	19	16
0	+11	+8	2d6+3 (10)	1d6+2 (5)	19	16
1	+13	+9	2d6+5 (12)	1d6+3 (6)	20	17
2	+14	+11	2d10+7 (18)	1d10+4 (9)	22	18
3	+16	+12	2d10+13 (24)	1d10+6 (12)	23	20
4	+17	+14	4d8+10 (28)	2d8+5 (14)	25	21
5	+19	+15	4d8+14 (32)	2d8+7 (16)	26	22
6	+20	+17	4d8+18 (36)	2d8+9 (18)	27	24
7	+22	+18	4d10+18 (40)	2d10+9 (20)	29	25
8	+23	+20	4d10+22 (44)	2d10+11 (22)	30	26
9	+25	+21	4d10+26 (48)	2d10+13 (24)	32	28
10	+26	+23	4d12+26 (52)	2d12+13 (26)	33	29
11	+28	+24	4d12+30 (56)	2d12+15 (28)	34	30
12	+29	+26	6d10+27 (60)	3d10+14 (30)	36	32
13	+31	+27	6d10+31 (64)	3d10+16 (32)	37	33
14	+32	+29	6d10+35 (68)	3d10+18 (34)	39	34
15	+34	+30	6d12+33 (72)	3d12+17 (36)	40	36
16	+35	+32	6d12+35 (74)	3d12+18 (37)	41	37
17	+37	+33	6d12+37 (76)	3d12+19 (38)	43	38
18	+38	+35	6d12+41 (80)	3d12+20 (40)	44	40
19	+40	+36	8d10+40 (84)	4d10+20 (42)	46	41
20	+41	+38	8d10+44 (88)	4d10+22 (44)	47	42
21	+43	+39	8d10+48 (92)	4d10+24 (46)	48	44
22	+44	+41	8d10+52 (96)	4d10+26 (48)	50	45
23	+46	+42	8d12+48 (100)	4d12+24 (50)	51	46
24	+47	+44	8d12+52 (104)	4d12+26 (52)	52	48

DESIGNING SIMPLE HAZARDS

When designing a simple hazard, make sure to select an appropriate trigger and effect. Often, a simple hazard that merely damages its target is little more than a speed bump that slows down the game without much added value, so think about the purpose of your hazard carefully, both in the story and in the game world, especially when it's a hazard that a creature intentionally built or placed in that location. A great simple hazard does something interesting, has a longer-lasting consequence, or integrates with the nearby inhabitants or even the encounters in some way (you can find more information on integrating hazards with encounters in Dynamic Encounters on page 48).

DESIGNING COMPLEX HAZARDS

Unlike a simple hazard, a complex hazard can play the part of a creature in a battle, or can be an encounter all its own. Many of the concerns with damaging effects when designing a simple hazard don't apply when designing a complex hazard. A complex hazard can apply its damage over and over again, eventually killing its hapless victim, and isn't intended to be a quick-to-overcome obstacle.

Complex hazards have a lot more in common with creatures than simple hazards do, and you'll see that a complex hazard's statistics are similar to those of a creature. A good complex hazard often requires disabling multiple components or otherwise interacting with the encounter in some way. For instance, while the *Core Rulebook's* poisoned dart gallery requires only one Thievery check to disable, the control panel is on the far end of the gallery, so a PC would need to make their way across first.

BUILDING ROUTINES

A complex hazard has a routine each round, whether it stems from preprogrammed instructions built into a trap, instincts and residual emotions swirling around a complex haunt, or a force of nature like sinking in quicksand. Make sure to build a routine that makes sense for the hazard; an environmental lava chute that ejects lava into the area each round shouldn't be able to seek out and precisely target only the PCs, but it might spatter random areas within range or everything within range, depending on how you describe the hazard. However, a complex haunt might be able to recognize life force and target living creatures.

If you create a hazard that can't consistently attack the PCs (like the *Core Rulebook's* blade pillar, which moves in a random direction), you can make it deadlier than normal in other ways.

The hazard should have as many actions as you feel it needs to perform its routine. If you split the routine out into several actions, you can also remove some of the hazard's actions once partial progress is made in disabling or destroying it; this can give the PCs a feeling of progress, and it can encourage them to handle the hazard if it appears in an encounter alongside creatures.

SIMPLE HAZARDS

A simple hazard uses its reaction when triggered.

SHRIEKER

HAZARD -1

ENVIRONMENTAL FUNGUS

Stealth DC 12

Description This human-sized purple mushroom emits a piercing shriek when disturbed.

Disable DC 18 Survival to carefully approach and cut the mushroom's air sac without triggering the shrieker

AC 12; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +2

HP 9; **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Shriek **Trigger** A creature or light source approaches within 10 feet of the shrieker or the shrieker takes damage; **Effect** The shrieker emits a deafening screech that deals 1d6 sonic damage to creatures within 30 feet (DC 16 basic Fortitude save; creatures that critically fail this saving throw are deafened for 1 minute).

Reset 1 minute

SNOWFALL

HAZARD 0

ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 16 (trained)

Description Loose snow and ice have built up on a high surface, such as a tree branch or a rooftop. Its grip on the surface is tenuous, and it is likely to fall if the surface moves.

Disable DC 19 Survival (trained) to safely dislodge the snow, or deal any amount of fire damage to destroy the hazard without triggering it

AC 16; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +8

HP 8; **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Snowdrop **Trigger** A creature moves beneath where the snowfall is resting; **Effect** Ice and snow fall on the triggering creature, dealing 2d6+3 bludgeoning damage (DC 18 basic Reflex save) and soaking their clothing. Until they change into fresh clothing or spend at least an hour in an area of normal or higher temperature, they treat cold environments as one step colder (for example, mild cold as severe cold).

HAMPERING WEB

HAZARD 1

ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 18 (expert)

Description Semitransparent sheets of webbing span the entryway, ready to capture small insects or hamper larger creatures that pass through.

Disable DC 17 Survival (trained) to dislodge it

AC 19; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +11

HP 26 (BT 13); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Ensnare **Trigger** A creature that isn't a spider walks into the web; **Effect** The web wraps around the triggering creature's body, clinging to their limbs. The triggering creature must succeed at a DC 20 Reflex save or take a -10-foot circumstance penalty to all their Speeds until they Escape

the web (DC 20). On a critical failure, the webbing also clings to the creature's face, making them sickened 1, and they can't attempt to reduce this condition until they Escape the web.

BROWN MOLD

HAZARD 2

ENVIRONMENTAL FUNGUS

Stealth DC 21 (trained)

Description This unassuming fungus leeches heat out of the air.

Disable DC 18 Survival (trained) to safely remove the mold

Emit Cold (aura, cold); 5 feet. Brown mold deals 2d6 cold damage to nearby creatures.

AC 18; **Fort** +11 **Ref** +5

HP 30 (BT 15); **Immunities** critical hits, fire, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** cold 10

Leech Warmth **Trigger** Fire comes within 5 feet of the brown mold; **Effect** The brown mold expands into every square adjacent to its space. As it grows, it pulls more heat from its surroundings, dealing 2d6+6 cold damage (DC 18 basic Fortitude save) to creatures within 10 feet after it expands.

Reset After expanding, the brown mold can't grow again for 1 day.

TREACHEROUS SCREE

HAZARD 3

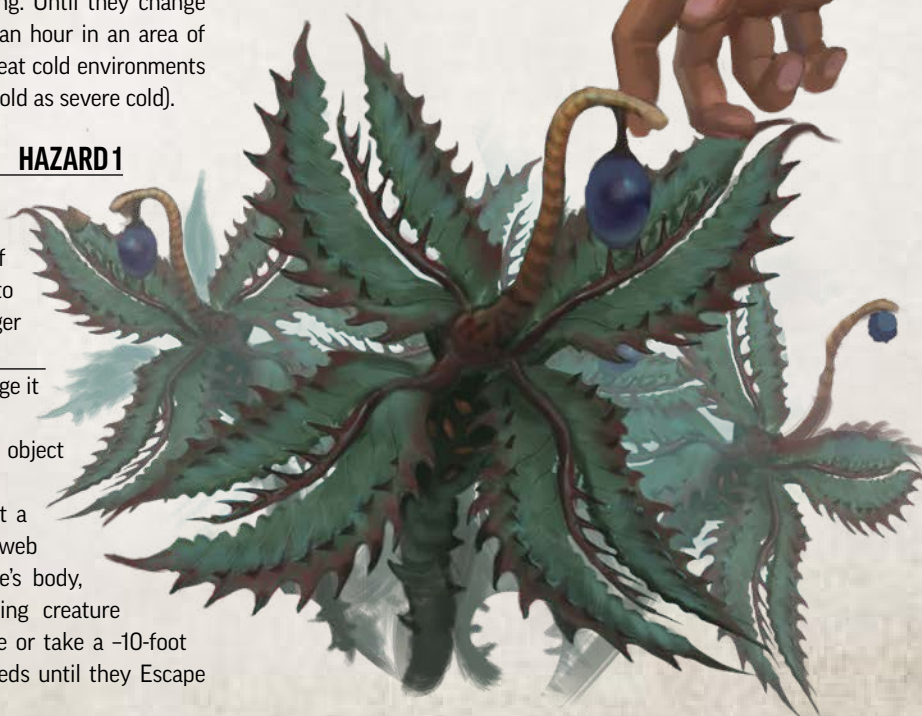
ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 23 (trained)

Description The footing on this sloped ground appears to be stable at first glance, but the tiny rocks that cover it are loosely packed and prone to slipping.

Disable DC 20 Survival (trained) to navigate a safe path

Rockslide **Trigger** A creature steps on the unstable ground; **Effect** Rocks tumble and slip beneath its feet. The triggering creature must attempt a DC 21 Reflex save as they tumble against the rocks, which deal 2d10+13 bludgeoning damage.



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Critical Success The creature takes no damage.

Success The creature takes half damage and falls prone in its space.

Failure The creature takes full damage, falls prone in its space, and tumbles down to the bottom of the slope.

Critical Failure As failure, but double damage.

TITANIC FLYTRAP

HAZARD 4

ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 25 (trained)

Description On the surface, a titanic flytrap appears to be a patch of the more common flytrap plant, but beneath murky waters it hides a far larger set of jaws, reaching 10 feet across and reinforced with woody branches and lined with paralytic hairs.

Disable DC 22 Survival (trained) to mislead the flytrap's sense of weight and pressure

AC 21; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +8

HP 56 (BT 28); **Immunities** mental; **Resistances** acid 20, fire 10

Snap Shut ➤ **Trigger** A Small or Medium creature moves into a square that is within reach of the flytrap's hidden jaws; **Effect** The flytrap's jaws snap shut, making a jaws Strike against the triggering creature.

Melee ➤ jaws +17, **Effect** devour

Devour The target is trapped by the flytrap's jaws, gaining the grabbed condition until it Escapes (DC 21). Additionally, it is exposed to the titanic flytrap toxin from the hundreds of tiny hairs that line the inside of its leaves. If the flytrap's jaws Strike was a critical success, the target takes a -2 circumstance penalty to its saving throws against this poison. At the end of each of target's turns that it remains grabbed, the target takes 3d6 acid damage.

Titanic Flytrap Toxin (contact, poison) **Saving Throw** DC 21 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 4 rounds; **Stage 1** 2d6 poison damage and stunned 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** 3d6 poison damage and stunned 2 (1 round); **Stage 3** 4d6 poison damage and paralyzed (1 round)

Reset 1 hour (or longer, after a large meal)

SPECTRAL REFLECTION

HAZARD 5

HAUNT

Stealth DC 26 (expert)

Description The reflection in the mirror subtly twists and distorts, its expression taking on an unnerving sneer of malice.

Disable DC 23 Religion (trained) to exorcise the spirit, or DC 23 Thievery (trained) to quickly cover the mirror

AC 19; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +10

Hardness 13, **HP** 50 (BT 25); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Spectral Impale ➤ **Trigger** A living creature approaches within 15 feet of the mirror, and the mirror is lit with dim or brighter light; **Effect** Shadowy barbs impale the body of the reflected creature as the haunt makes a shadow barbs Strike.

Melee ➤ shadow barbs +19, **Damage** 4d8+9 negative plus sap vitality

Sap Vitality A creature hit by the reflection's shadow barbs must attempt a DC 22 Fortitude save as the haunt tries to draw a portion of its vital essence into the mirror. The target is drained 1 on a failed saving throw, or drained 2 on a critical failure.

Reset The haunt re-forms after 1 minute, manifesting in any mirror within its infused area (see Special below).

Special Spectral reflections often infuse entire buildings, manifesting in any sufficiently large mirror. The example Hit Points and Hardness given represent a typical mirror reinforced by the haunt; at your discretion, the haunt might appear in reflective surfaces that are harder to destroy. Defeating a manifestation through damage destroys the surface, preventing the haunt from using it again. If this haunt appears in an area with many mirrors, consider giving PCs double or even triple the XP for a typical simple hazard.

GHOSTLY CHOIR

HAZARD 6

HAUNT

Stealth DC 20 (expert)

Description A choir of lost souls rises out of the floor, singing an eerie chant that terrifies its listeners and buffets their bodies with walls of sound.

Disable DC 28 Performance (trained) to disrupt the song's resonance with another tune or DC 28 Religion (trained) to ritually silence the spirits

Profane Chant ➤ (auditory, emotion, enchantment, fear, mental, occult) **Trigger** A creature moves within 10 feet of the section of floor from which the choir can arise; **Effect** The choir rises, and its song deals 4d8+18 mental damage to non-evil creatures within 30 feet of the souls' spectral forms. Affected creatures must each attempt a DC 24 Will save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes half damage and becomes frightened 1.

Failure The creature takes full damage and becomes frightened 2.

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage. It also becomes frightened 3 and fleeing for 1 round.

GREEN SLIME

HAZARD 9

ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 30 (expert)

Description A caustic green film clings to the ceiling above, watching for prey to pass beneath it.

Disable DC 33 Survival (expert) to carefully peel the slime off the ceiling without touching it

AC 20; **Fort** +25 **Ref** +15

HP 200 (BT 100); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** cold 20, fire 20

Dissolving Ambush ➤ **Trigger** A creature walks beneath the slime; **Effect** The green slime drops on top of the creature, attempting to dissolve it into a nutritious slurry. The target must attempt a DC 28 Reflex save.

Critical Success The target leaps out of the way, and it is unaffected.

Success A small amount of the slime splashes onto the target. The target is drained 1.

Failure The slime lands on its target. The target is drained 1, and this condition value increases by 1 at the end of its turn each round until the slime is removed. If the target reaches drained 4, the next time its drained value would increase, it dies and collapses into a slurry of nutrients. A slime covering a target can no longer be removed through Survival checks, and damage dealt to the slime is also dealt to the target (applying the target's immunities, weaknesses, and resistances rather than those of the green slime).

Critical Failure The slime completely coats its target. This has the same effect as a failure, except the target is immediately drained 2, becomes drained 4 after 1 round, and dies after 2 rounds.

Reset 1 hour, as the slime feasts and then slowly creeps back up to the ceiling

JEALOUS ABJURER

HAZARD 11

HAUNT

Stealth DC 33 (master)

Description A robe-clad spirit rises out of the floor, pointing an accusing finger.

Disable DC 36 Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion (master) to convince the spirit that the target's magical knowledge is too great to be trifled with

Rend Magic ☞ (abjuration, arcane) **Trigger** A creature that is currently affected by a beneficial spell approaches within 30 feet of the abjurer; **Effect** Envyng the fame and magical prowess of others, the jealous abjurer attempts to engineer a catastrophic failure in the highest-level beneficial spell currently affecting its target. It attempts a counteract check with a +26 modifier. If the counteract check succeeds, the spell is dispelled, and the creature it had been affecting takes 4d12+30 force damage as the spell violently implodes (DC 32 basic Reflex save).

Reset 1 hour

PLUMMETING DOOM

HAZARD 15

HAUNT

Stealth DC 40 (master) to hear the echoes of a faraway object crashing into the ground

Description Four vengeful spirits grab interlopers and toss them off the edge of a nearby 120-foot-tall cliff.

Disable DC 40 Athletics (trained) to push back so forcefully that the spirits fear being thrown off the cliff, or DC 40 Religion (expert) to temporarily seal the spirits away

Call of the Ground ☞ (divine, abjuration) **Trigger** A creature approaches within 15 feet of the edge of the cliff; **Effect** Each spirit attempts to throw a creature within 60 feet of the cliff's edge off the cliff by attempting a check with a +26 modifier against the

target's Fortitude DC. If the haunt succeeds, the target is thrown over the edge of the cliff, where it then falls 120 feet to the ground.

Until the haunt is defeated, each creature within 60 feet of the cliff's edge must attempt a DC 40 Will save each time they would spend an action or reaction to Arrest a Fall, Fly, Grab an Edge, or otherwise avoid falling; if they fail the save, the action is disrupted. The haunt automatically attempts to counteract spells that would slow a fall or mitigate the effects of falling, such as *feather fall*, with a counteract modifier of +32.

Reset 1 hour

GRASP OF THE DAMNED

HAZARD 17

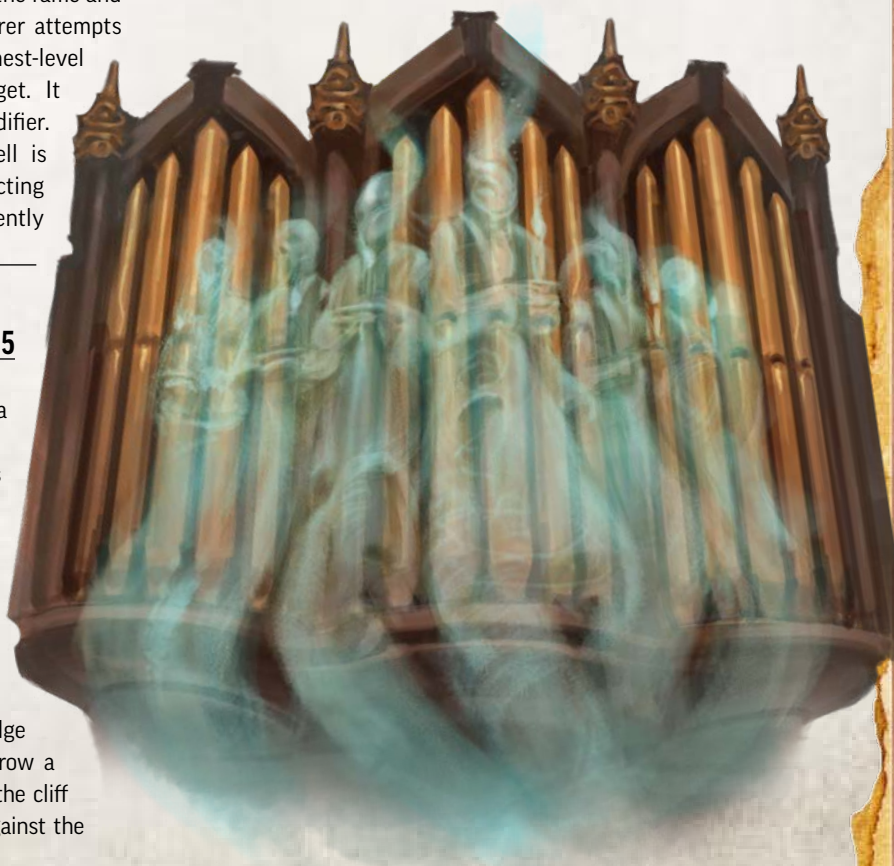
HAUNT

Stealth DC 43 (master)

Description These desperate spirits are the echoes of people who committed great atrocities in the name of an evil god. Now, they are left with only the knowledge that their souls have been damned, and the unwavering belief that they can better their fate by providing powerful sacrifices for their fiendish masters.

Disable DC 46 Religion (master) to inspire a deity to intervene and counteract the ritual

Mark for Damnation ☞ (death, divine, necromancy) **Trigger** Three or more sentient living creatures of 13th level or higher enter the haunt's area; **Effect** The haunt deals 6d12+35 negative damage to each creature in the haunt's area, and each creature must attempt a DC 40 Will save.





Critical Success The creature takes no damage and is doomed 1.

Success The creature takes half damage and is doomed 1.

Failure The creature takes full damage, becomes doomed 2, and is marked for damnation.

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage, becomes doomed 3, and is marked for damnation.

If a creature that is marked for damnation dies within the next 24 hours, including from the haunt's damage, its soul is immediately dragged away to the plane of the evil deity that the damned spirits served, where the creature's soul is held captive by one of that deity's powerful servitors. Only *wish* and similarly potent effects are able to recover the lost soul directly; however, it is also possible to recover the soul by journeying to the evil plane and defeating the soul's captor.

Reset 1 day

COMPLEX HAZARDS

Complex hazards roll initiative and act on their turn.

ETERNAL FLAME

HAZARD 7

COMPLEX HAUNT

Stealth +18 (expert)

Description A raging spectral inferno arises out of thin air, strengthening all undead creatures within its area. This haunt most often arises from the charred remains of a group of three people who burned to death, whether in a terrible accident or a deliberate execution, and their unavenged souls burn with rage.

Disable DC 27 Diplomacy (expert) to temporarily calm the rage of one of the three spirits, or DC 30 Religion (trained) to exorcise one of the spirits; three total successes are required to disable the haunt

Searing Agony ⤿ (divination, mental) **Trigger** A living creature approaches within 10 feet of the remains of a victim of the original fire; **Effect** Memories of the pain suffered by the fire's past victims assault the triggering creature's mind. The creature must attempt a DC 25 Will save, and the haunt then rolls initiative.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is sickened 1.

Failure The creature is sickened 2.

Critical Failure The creature is sickened 3, and it is flat-footed for as long as it remains within the haunt's area and for 3 rounds thereafter.

Routine (1 action) Phantom flames rage across the haunted area, dealing 4d6 fire damage to each living creature within the area (DC 23 basic Will save). Undead creatures in the area are infused with flames for the following round. They gain the fire trait and immunity to fire, and all their attacks deal an additional 1d6 fire damage. Objects in the area are unaffected.

Reset The flames cease 1 minute after all living creatures leave the area, but after 1 hour, the anger and pain simmer up and the haunt is ready to trigger again.

CONFOUNDING BETRAYAL

HAZARD 8

COMPLEX HAUNT

Stealth +21 (expert)

Description Allies appear to shed their disguises and reveal themselves to be malevolent monsters.

Disable DC 28 Deception (expert) twice to confound the haunt with your own deceptions, or DC 28 Occultism (trained) twice to create a ward against the haunt's mental influence

Unmask ⤿ (illusion, occult) **Trigger** Two or more creatures enter the haunt's area; **Effect** Each creature sees the forms of nearby creatures shift and change, appearing to transform into fiendish or aberrant beings with a thirst for blood. Each creature in the area must attempt a DC 30 Will save.

Critical Success The creature sees through the illusions entirely and is temporarily immune to the haunt's routine for 1 minute.

Success The creature is unaffected by the strange images.

Failure The creature believes the illusions to be true; if they become confused by the haunt's routine, they can't attempt flat checks to end the confused condition when they take damage.

Critical Failure As failure, but the creature is left with a lingering suspicion of others and can't benefit from Aid reactions for 24 hours.

Routine (1 action; illusion, incapacitation, occult) The haunt continues to confound victims' senses and inspire them to commit violence against each other. Each creature in the haunt's area must attempt a DC 26 Will save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected and temporarily immune for 1 minute.

Success The creature is unaffected.

Failure The creature is confused for 1 round.

Critical Failure The creature is confused for 1 minute.

Reset The haunt deactivates 1 minute after all creatures leave the area but resets immediately thereafter.

PERILOUS FLASH FLOOD

HAZARD 10

COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth +22 (expert)

Description Whether made up of water rushing through the streets that sweeps up dangerous debris along the way or a less natural substance bursting free of its container, this relentless flood batters everything in its path.

Disable three DC 35 Athletics, Crafting, or Survival checks to move or construct barricades strong enough to create a shelter from the flood. While this creates a safe place to stand, creatures outside of the barricaded area may still be in danger depending on the nature and the source of the flood.

Burst Free ⤿ **Trigger** A creature or effect breaks the flood's containment; **Effect** The hazard rolls initiative as the flood surges forth.

Routine (1 action) The flood advances forward 60 feet, crashing into all creatures within its area. Each creature must attempt a DC 30 Fortitude save as the floodwaters pummel them and pull them downstream. The amount and type of damage dealt are based on the nature of the flood, and certain types of

floods impose additional effects. The turbulent waters mean creatures within the area of the flood must attempt a DC 20 Athletics check to Swim in order to move, and those who do not succeed at a check to Swim each round may drown.

Critical Success The creature takes no damage.

Success The creature takes half damage.

Failure The creature takes full damage and is moved 10 feet along with the water.

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage and is moved 20 feet along with the water.

- **Acidic Runoff** This caustic flood dissolves flesh as it moves, dealing 1d12 bludgeoning damage and 1d12+8 acid damage. Additionally, it deals 2d6 persistent acid damage to creatures who critically fail their Fortitude saves.
- **Battering Waves** This flood of rushing water deals 2d12+10 bludgeoning damage.
- **Repulsive Refuse** This flood has picked up tainted or disease-ridden objects like sewer runoff or rotting food. It deals 2d12+8 bludgeoning damage. Each creature exposed to the flood must attempt a DC 29 Fortitude save, becoming sickened 1 on a failure or sickened 2 on a critical failure. Additionally, creatures who come into contact with the flood waters are exposed to filth fever (DC 20 Fortitude, *Bestiary* 258).
- **Sharp Debris** The waters have picked up various objects, some of which are particularly sharp. The flood deals 1d12 bludgeoning damage and 1d12+12 piercing damage.
- **Sticky Goo** The substance is particularly sticky. It deals 2d12+6 bludgeoning damage. Additionally, each creature in the flood must attempt a DC 29 Reflex save at the beginning of their turn each round. On a failed saving throw, they take a -10-foot circumstance penalty to all their Speeds for 1 round. On a critical failure, they are instead immobilized for 1 round.

FLENSING BLADES

HAZARD 12

COMPLEX HAUNT

Stealth +25 (expert)

Description A whirling tornado of spectrally propelled glass and steel slices whatever it touches to ribbons.

Disable DC 35 Thievery (master) to precisely adjust the blades so that they destroy each other, or DC 38 Religion (expert) to weaken the haunt; four successes are required to disable it

AC 33; **Fort** +27, **Ref** +25, **Will** +22

Hardness 20; **HP** 100 (BT 50); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** positive 15

Whirling Blades **Trigger** Three or more creatures enter the area of the haunt; **Effect** sharp fragments lift up from the ground and begin to spin in rapid circles taking up one 5-foot square. The haunt rolls initiative.

Routine (3 actions) The tornado of blades uses 3 actions to move, traveling up to 30 feet with each action and dealing 2d10+10 slashing damage. Each creature in its path must attempt a DC 33 Reflex save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes half damage.

Failure The creature takes full damage plus 1d10 persistent bleed damage.

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage and 1d10 persistent bleed damage. It also becomes wounded 1 (or increases its wounded value by 1, if it is already wounded). Each successful check to disable this hazard reduces the haunt's movement by 30 feet, and the fourth success disables it completely.

Reset The haunt draws jagged shards back into its area over the course of an hour, after which it can trigger again.

DANCE OF DEATH

HAZARD 16

COMPLEX HAUNT

Stealth +32 (master)

Description An eerie orchestra compels all who hear it to dance until they collapse from exhaustion.

Disable DC 42 Intimidation (expert) three times to frighten dancers and spectral musicians alike away from participating in the deadly performance, DC 40 Performance (master) twice to produce a tune discordant enough to disrupt the compulsion, or DC 42 Religion (master) three times to banish the spirits with prayers

Prelude **Trigger** (auditory, enchantment, incapacitation, occult)

A creature approaches within 30 feet of the orchestra; **Effect** The orchestra compels all creatures that can hear it to begin dancing. Each creature must attempt a DC 41 Will save, with the following effects.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is flat-footed and cannot use reactions. Additionally, it must spend 1 of its actions each round dancing. Dancing is a move action that allows the creature to Stride up to half its Speed.

Failure As success, except the creature must spend 2 of its actions each round dancing.

Critical Failure As failure, except the creature must spend 3 of its actions each round dancing.

Routine (1 action; auditory, enchantment, incapacitation, occult) The orchestra performs a raucous tune, compelling all creatures that can hear it to spend actions dancing. Each round, creature must attempt a DC 37 Will save; the results of this save modify the number of actions that the creature must spend dancing each round. If this would cause the creature to spend more actions dancing than it can use on its turn, the creature takes 10d6 damage (or double that on a critical failure) from moving faster than its body can manage.

Critical Success The creature decreases the number of actions it must spend dancing by 1.

Success No effect.

Failure The creature increases the actions it must spend dancing by 1.

Critical Failure The creature increases the actions it must spend dancing by 2.

Reset The eerie orchestra spends an hour retuning its phantasmal instruments, after which it is ready to begin its routine again.

BUILDING ITEMS

Creating your own magic and alchemical items is an amazing way to customize the adventure and gameplay for your group and add unique elements without requiring quite the same mechanical depth as a whole new class, archetype, or ancestry.

New items make great mementos of previous adventures and tend to be one of the easiest elements for a character to begin using mid-campaign after receiving them as a reward. This section explains the philosophy and numbers behind creating items so you can design your own in no time!

CONCEPT AND ROLE

First, come up with a concept for the item based on the role the item serves in your game and in the game's world. You might include a new item in an ancient ruin to hint at the its history and the people who used to live there. For instance, a Thassilonian ruin might have an item based on rune magic, while a Jistkan ruin might have an item related to golems.

A new magic item might be important later in the story, or its role might be as simple as a fun wolf-themed item for the monk that uses Wolf Stance. Keep your concept in mind to guide you through the rest of the process. Start thinking about what kind of magic item it will be. Each item type has its own niche, and some are less likely to be as useful to the PCs. For instance, new weapons and armor require the PC to give up the weapon or armor they already have, which might make them more reluctant to use the new items unless they're noticeably better, while consumable items don't have as big an impact on the story as permanent items.

ITEM LEVEL

A new item is typically going to be within a few levels of the PCs. If it's too low, it might not be interesting, and if it's too high, it might be too powerful or too lucrative to sell.

COMPARISON

First, take a look at similar items. For example, if you want a permanent item that lets someone fly, look at the *broom of flying*, which moves of its own volition to a location and thus can't be used to gain a huge advantage during combat, and *winged boots*, which can. This will give you an idea of the right level range and the different specifics and limitations of existing items. You might even be able to just adjust one of those a bit to get what you want with minimal work.

ITEM EFFECTS

Next, use the item's concept and role to decide its effects. This is where your creativity will bring the item to life. Make sure to have it do something exciting and roleplay-inspiring. A magic item that does nothing more than deliver a bonus is far less interesting, even if the item does have a load-bearing item bonus, like a magic weapon. To determine the item's power, take into account the special abilities you give the item as well as the item bonus (if any) that it grants.

For specific advice for the type of magic item you are creating, check out Designing by Type on page 83.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

When deciding what special abilities are appropriate for what level, it's best to look for similar spells to gauge the effect. For most consumables, the effect should be less powerful than the highest level spell a spellcaster of the item's level could cast. Scrolls are about the most efficient you can get—they're the same level the spellcaster would be—but they require a spellcaster that has the spell on their list, and take the same actions as casting the spell normally.

The most straightforward choice is a once-per-day ability. For this, the item's level should be at least 2 levels higher than the minimum level a spellcaster could first cast that spell. For example, if your ability is about as powerful as a 3rd-level spell cast once per day (perhaps *haste*), then it should be at least a 7th-level item. A basic wand is a good example. However, a wand is flexible and can contain the most effective possible choice for its spell level (such as long-lasting spells where once a day is effectively permanent), so a specific item that doesn't grant such a spell could have additional powers or bonuses at the same price as a wand.

If the item can be activated multiple times per day, it should be at least 4 levels higher instead—9th level in our example. Frequency could range from twice per day to once per hour and anything in between. Choose whatever makes sense to allow the characters to use the item more frequently without being effectively constant or unlimited. The appropriate frequency, or whether it's ever okay to have unlimited activations, varies wildly based on the spell. Unlimited castings of a cantrip is fine, but an effect akin to a non-cantrip spell is rarely a good idea. Only attempt to build such an item when you're certain of the consequences.

Items that can be activated less often than once per day don't appear too often, and they usually fit best with abilities that make sense outside of encounters. It's still best to stick to the guidelines for once-per-day abilities, but these items tend to have more properties—and often strange ones.

CONSTANT ABILITIES

If you want an effect to be constant, set the level and Price accordingly. For instance, let's say your group is 16th level and you want to give them an item themed around flying. A 7th-level *fly* spell lasts an hour already, so one casting covers a significant portion of the adventuring day. To keep it simpler, you decide to create a 16th-level cloak that lets the wearer constantly fly. Remember, some effects were never meant to be constant and could warp your game.

ACTIVATION ACTIONS

Watch out when picking the number of actions an activation takes! A 1-action activation that casts a spell with a 2-action casting time is drastically more powerful in an encounter than an item with a 2-action activation would be. An item like that is typically much higher level, and it works best with “helper” spells or ones with limited utility rather than offensive spells. The safest bet is to use the same number of actions the spell normally takes to cast.

SCALING OUT OF USEFULNESS

Some spells aren't appealing if their level is too low. For instance, an item that casts 1st-level *burning hands* three times per day might be 5th or 6th level. The problem is that spell scaling has the biggest impact at low levels, so the spell isn't effective compared to other actions a character could take. Err on the side of fewer, more impressive activations.

BONUSES

If your item includes item bonuses, check the table below for the minimum item levels the game's math expects permanent bonuses to be applied to. A lower-level item might give such a bonus temporarily, but keep track to make sure the item isn't effectively permanent. If a character typically picks three or fewer locks a day, there's no difference between a +2 item bonus to pick all locks and an activation that gives a +2 item bonus to Pick a Lock three times per day.

For attack bonuses, AC, and saves, the minimums match *magic weapons* and *magic armor*. You can have other items with these bonuses (like *handwraps of mighty blows*), but keep in mind they compete with fundamental runes.

Skill bonuses come on a wider range of items. Some are more broadly useful, so an Athletics item might be more expensive than an equivalent Society item. Gaining a bonus to Perception is especially valuable compared to gaining a bonus to a skill. Just because an item is the minimum level for its bonus doesn't mean the bonus should be the item's only power. The item can and should have an additional interesting power beyond the bonus. Likewise, an item can come at a higher level than the minimum, but if it's much higher, its abilities start to compete with the next bonus.

TABLE 2-17: LEVELS FOR PERMANENT ITEM BONUSES

Statistic	+1	+2	+3
Attack bonus	2	10	16
AC	5	11	18
Save (resilient rune)	8	14	20
Skill/Perception	3	9	17*

* This is also the minimum level for apex items.

DESIGNING BY TYPE

The following guidance applies to items of various types.

ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

Alchemical items are consumables. Because alchemists can make a large number for free, alchemical items tend to be

on the weaker end for their level, with lower Prices. Avoid alchemical effects that feel too much like magic. Alchemy is capable of fantastical things, but should have its own distinct feel; where you draw the line depends on your game.

Alchemical bombs are like weapons for alchemists and should usually primarily deal damage, with small extra effects. Existing bombs are great models. Elixirs are varied; make sure not to duplicate potions, especially highly magical ones. Be careful with mutagen drawbacks; it's easy to make one that doesn't affect certain characters. Look at the serene mutagen. If its drawback didn't affect spells, Wisdom-based casters who didn't use weapons would have no drawback. Poisons are one of the trickier alchemical items to make, and it's usually best to just tweak one found in the *Core Rulebook* to avoid making something that's overpowered; compare to poisons of the same type that have similar onset and stage duration, as longer onset and duration poisons tend to deal drastically more damage. Alchemical tools are best used for adding a little weirdness. They can be especially creative and interesting, but tend not to be powerful.

AMMUNITION

Magic ammunition is consumable; launching it destroys it. Pay attention to whether you give the ammunition an activation: any big flashy effect for its level should almost always have one, since otherwise the effect is essentially a free action on top of a Strike. This is particularly important for extremely low-level ammunition, since a high-level character could use that ammunition for every Strike without noticing the gold cost. If the ammunition doesn't deal normal Strike damage on a hit, remember to say that! Dealing damage is the default.

ARMOR AND WEAPONS

Specific armor and weapons replace the opportunity to add property runes, so you have a lot of space to design. Choose abilities that feel attached to the fact that they are weapons or armor; for instance, a fiery sword that you point at an enemy to shoot fire bolts is more on theme than a fiery sword that casts *wall of fire* in an unconnected way.

The specific item should cost more than the base armor or weapon would with just the fundamental runes, but you can often discount the cost of the additional components significantly as part of the specific item's special niche. Be careful about specific armor or weapons that include property runes in addition to unique specific abilities. If you discount the item, you might end up with an item significantly superior to one built using the normal property runes system. That's not always bad, since it's still giving up customization for power, and this can be appropriate if the item has an important place in your story. Just make sure the difference isn't too drastic. If you just want to create armor or a weapon with runes and no extra special abilities, you can do so. The Price of such an item is the sum of all the runes' Prices, and its level is that of the highest-level rune on the item.

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POTIONS VS. ELIXIRS

Alchemical items and magic items follow a similar price economy based on their level, but the effects of potions can be a bit broader and more directly magical. Alchemists can also make extremely large numbers of elixirs at an item level equal to their alchemist level, so if a 17th level elixir was competing with a 9th level spell for power, an alchemist would be packing the equivalent of over 40 9th level spells, and potentially quickened spells thanks to the single action activation.

When picking abilities, you can also consider taking from the relic gifts found on pages 96–105. Even if your game doesn't use relics, that section has plenty of choices sorted by theme. If you do, keep in mind that relic abilities are typically more powerful than usual for their level and that those abilities wouldn't scale on a normal magic item.

HELD ITEMS

Usually, held items should require manipulation to use, with Interact activations. They are most often tools, implements, items that can be thrown, and the like. Imagine a PC physically using the item and what that looks like.

Remember that held items are more challenging for martial characters to use, compared to spellcasters or hands-free characters, like monks. A barbarian might have to give up a two-handed weapon to use a held item, and so is less likely to use one. This means you might want to design held items specifically for non-martial characters, or have them be items a martial character uses outside of combat.

OILS

Oils are consumables you slather onto items or, rarely, creatures. They provide an interesting opportunity to apply effects to other items. Just remember not to accidentally make something that should be applied topically into a potion; for instance, a petrified character can't drink an anti-petrifying potion! The actions an oil takes to use depend on how thoroughly it needs to be applied. For one used outside of combat, it could take a minute or more.

POTIONS

Potions are consumables in the truest sense; you literally consume them. Since the action of drinking isn't easy to split up, they take only a single action to activate. This advantage makes potions that replicate spell effects incredibly powerful, and it's the reason potions are nearly always higher level than scrolls with similar effects.

RUNES

Property runes are a fun and versatile way to customize weapons and armor without throwing away the previous items. Each should be fairly simple, especially at lower levels, because combining runes can make things overcomplicated. Compare to other properties to determine the right level.

SCROLLS

You'll never need to design a new scroll, but use them as a comparison when designing other types of consumables. If you're designing a consumable that seems like it's much better than a scroll of its level—or faster to activate—you should probably raise the item's level or adjust the effect.

SHIELDS

Use the *sturdy shields* as benchmarks for the best possible shield Hardness, HP, and BT for a shield of that level. Your new shield should have less than those benchmarks since it also does something else, and you can use the magnitude of the reduction to build room for creative defensive abilities.

STAVES

You'll need to come up with a theme and curate a list of spells that stay close to that theme, typically one to three per spell level, all on one spell list. A staff is always at least 3 levels higher than the minimum level for a spellcaster to cast the highest-level spell it contains, so a staff with up to 4th-level spells would be at least a 10th-level item.

STRUCTURES

Structures are evocative and make great tertiary items, quirky but not part of a combat build. This allows you to price them affordably, but make sure there isn't some hidden abuse where the structure drastically alters encounters. The structure trait is intended to help as a starting point.

TALISMANS

Because talismans are affixed ahead of time but don't take an action to retrieve, they reward forethought and planning. Those that can be activated as a free action also have the best action efficiency of any consumable. In the same way scrolls reward specific spellcasters, talisman requirements reward particular types of characters. Talismans might grant a single use of a feat, with an additional effect if the character already has that feat. Think of talismans as martial characters' answer to scrolls to expand on the options of the non-spellcasters at your table.

WANDS

You won't need to design basic *magic wands*, but you might want a special wand. When designing a new special wand, your wand's level will usually be 1 to 2 levels higher than the basic wand, depending on the magnitude of the special effect. Remember that if you make the wand 2 levels higher, it's now competing with wands of a spell a whole level higher, so the special effect should be worth that cost!

WORN ITEMS

Worn items vary wildly in their effects, but they all take up one of a character's 10 invested items. Remember to include the item's worn entry, if applicable (or — if you could imagine someone wearing 10 or more with no difficulty).

Where the item is worn should usually match its effects or bonuses: shoes help you move, eyepieces affect your vision, and so on. As with held items, imagine a character wearing the item to picture how they use its magic.

Apex items are always at least level 17 and should have unique abilities on top of their bonus, just like other items.

FILL IN THE NUMBERS

You're almost done! The final step is to fill in the numbers.

DCS

Choose any DCs for the item's abilities. You can't go wrong with the typical DCs in Table 2-18. However, an item with a narrow function might have a DC up to 2 higher, and one that forces a save (such as with an aura) is typically 2 lower. The lower the DC, the quicker the item becomes obsolete.

TABLE 2-18: MAGIC ITEM DCs

Item Level	DC
1	15
2	16
3	17
4	18
5	19
6	20
7	23
8	24
9	25
10	27
11	28
12	29
13	30
14	31
15	34
16	35
17	37
18	38
19	41
20	43

ITEM PRICES

Use the following guidelines for pricing items.

PERMANENT ITEMS

Each item level has a price range. Based on the item's role and abilities, decide where in that range to place it. There's plenty of variation, and you primarily need to worry about Price only if you expect the PCs will be able to sell it.

Primary items cost near the highest value for their level. They have a big impact on combat or player ability. This includes weapons, armor, and Perception items. The highest price is for items like *magic weapons*, *magic armor*, and apex items. So a *+1 striking weapon* is 100 gp at 4th level.

Secondary items, with middle values, give significant secondary benefits or enhance highly consequential noncombat or support skills like Medicine or Crafting.

Tertiary items, with low value, are weird or very specific items, ones not usually core to a character's build. Especially strange ones might fall into the gap between two levels.

TABLE 2-19: PERMANENT MAGIC ITEM PRICE

Level	Price	Core Item
1	10–20 gp	
2	25–35 gp	+1 weapon
3	45–60 gp	+1 skill item
4	75–100 gp	+1 striking weapon
5	125–160 gp	+1 armor
6	200–250 gp	
7	300–360 gp	
8	415–500 gp	+1 resilient armor
9	575–700 gp	+2 skill item
10	820–1,000 gp	+2 striking weapon
11	1,160–1,400 gp	+2 resilient armor
12	1,640–2,000 gp	+2 greater striking weapon
13	2,400–3,000 gp	
14	3,600–4,500 gp	+2 greater resilient armor
15	5,300–6,500 gp	
16	7,900–10,000 gp	+3 greater striking weapon
17	12,000–15,000 gp	+3 skill item, apex item
18	18,600–24,000 gp	+3 greater resilient armor
19	30,400–40,000 gp	+3 superior striking weapon
20	52,000–70,000 gp	+3 superior resilient armor

CONSUMABLES

Consumables have a slightly narrower range, with top-end items like scrolls, optimum healing potions, or super-useful consumables like a *potion of invisibility* at the high end.

TABLE 2-20: CONSUMABLE PRICE

Level	Price
1	3–4 gp
2	5–7 gp
3	8–12 gp
4	13–20 gp
5	21–30 gp
6	31–50 gp
7	51–70 gp
8	71–100 gp
9	101–150 gp
10	151–200 gp
11	201–300 gp
12	301–400 gp
13	401–600 gp
14	601–900 gp
15	901–1,300 gp
16	1,301–2,000 gp
17	2,001–3,000 gp
18	3,001–5,000 gp
19	5,001–8,000 gp
20	8,001–14,000 gp

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ITEM QUIRKS

Item quirks are peculiar characteristics that make items unique in unusual ways. These can make individual items—particularly permanent items—stand out from one another, and can give additional wonder to magical items beyond just their mechanical benefits.

You can use the table found here to quickly apply a quirk to any item, such as items found as treasure or new items that a PC creates. Rather than rolling, you can instead choose one yourself or invent a new quirk. Item quirks don't normally have any mechanical effect, since their only purpose is to be colorful and further flesh out the world, though you can add one if you so choose. Such

effects should never grant more than a +1 item bonus or –1 item penalty, and even then the statistic or check it applies to should be narrow. For a quirk that grants an item the ability to speak, you choose the language based on the history of the item, or your best guess of what that history might be. It's typically a language spoken by the item's creator.

TABLE 2-21: QUIRKS

d%	Quirk	Description
01	Melodic	Faint music plays when in use.
02	Skin-altering	The user's skin color changes to a bright color such as blue or green.
03	Choral	Repeats everything the user says in a singing voice.
04	Mood coloration	User's mood affects the item's color.
05	Chatty	Happily engages in small talk.
06	Spoiling	Food within 1 foot spoils at twice the normal rate.
07	Friendly	Requests to be introduced to everyone the user meets.
08	Muffling	Nearby sounds are slightly quieter.
09	Runic	Runes appear on the user's skin.
10	Comfortable	Can serve as a pillow or blanket.
11	Rain-blocking	The user remains dry in the rain.
12	Clumsy	When unattended, knocks over other small items within 1 foot.
13	Elemental appearance	Seems made of flame, water, or another elemental material.
14	Magnetic	Small, ferrous objects of light Bulk or less adhere to it.
15	Aberrant	Has tentacles, teeth, or other off-putting features.
16	Dream-eating	Creatures asleep within 10 feet do not dream.
17	Clean	Remains pristine despite filth.
18	Hungry	Needs daily meals, often odd things like wood shavings.
19	Smelly	Smells like the last food the user ate.
20	Flamboyant	Flashes of light, sparks of color, and other effects shower from it.
21	Verdant trail	Small plants grow where the user walks, remaining for 1 hour.
22	Complaining	Grumbles when not in use.
23	Detecting	Aware of a specific animal or plant, such as squirrels or poison ivy, within 30 feet.
24	Fibbing	Tells grandiose and obvious lies.
25	Compressing	User is slightly shorter.
26	Attentive	Turns to face the last creature to touch it.

27	Soprano	User's voice becomes higher.
28	Shrinking	Decreases in size when used.
29	Aromatic	Nearby air smells pleasant.
30	Temperate	Slight warmth spills from the item.
31	Slime trail	User leaves a trail of slime where they walk, remaining for 1 hour.
32	Tetrachromatic	Colors seem more vivid to the user.
33	Resounding	Nearby sounds are slightly louder.
34	Insect-attracting	Harmless insects swarm around it.
35	Ancient tongue	Speaks in a forgotten language.
36	Bloodthirsty	The sight of blood causes it to quiver in anticipation.
37	Polished	Highly reflective.
38	Scribing	Absorbs ink for 1 hour, allowing its points to be used as a pen.
39	Dirty	A layer of filth always remains.
40	Eye-altering	User's eye color changes.
41	Preserving	Food within 1 foot spoils at half rate.
42	Leafy	Small plants grow on or from it.
43	Wet	It and its user are always damp.
44	Encouraging	Offers encouragement when the user fails a check.
45	Loyal	Remains within 5 feet of the user, as if on a tether.
46	Ritualistic	Demands the user perform a simple act every morning.
47	Restless	Slowly moves and fidgets.
48	Displaced	Appears offset from where it is.
49	Caring	Provides advice and reminders.
50	Projecting	Light creates a kaleidoscopic effect.
51	Hair-altering	User's hair color changes.
52	Watchful	Staring eyes cover it.
53	Generous	Produces small, token gifts.
54	Bass	User's voice becomes lower.
55	Leaking	Secretes a harmless liquid.
56	Taste-altering	Food tastes different, such as tasting sweeter or saltier.
57	Bouncy	Bounces on collision.
58	Lucid	Creatures asleep within 10 feet see the item in their dreams.
59	Decorous	Insists the user use polite language.
60	Junky	Appears shoddy or made of scraps.
61	Cavorting	Dances in place when not in use.

62	Furry	Covered by a thin coat of fur.
63	Unusually colored	An outlandish color, such as a bright purple suit of armor.
64	Sonorous	Sounds a pure tone when struck.
65	Starry	Seems made of night sky.
66	Compact	Packs neatly into a smaller form.
67	Misting	Constantly leaking mist or steam.
68	Chirping	Coos and squeaks when used.
69	Balanced	Always remains perfectly upright.
70	Sun-blocking	User never receives sunburns.
71	Animal-attracting	Harmless animals follow the user.
72	Flaunting	Forces user to move dramatically.
73	Tracing	Followed by thin trails of color.
74	Monologuing	Recites long lectures or speeches.
75	Foretelling	Makes mysterious predictions.
76	Adhesive	Sticks slightly to any surface.
77	Levitating	Floats slightly above a surface.
78	Slimy	Covered by a thin layer of slime.
79	Commentating	Remarks on its surroundings.
80	Numbing	User is less sensitive to pain.
81	Time-telling	Announces the current time.
82	Towering	User is slightly taller.
83	Absorbent	Absorbs up to one pint of liquid.
84	Faceted	Appears made of crystal or gems.

85	Bubbly	Creates bubbles when used.
86	Image-flipping	User appears to be mirrored.
87	Hair-growing	User's hair grows at double rate.
88	Alternating	Appearance slowly changes.
89	Sweaty	Becomes damp and pungent when used extensively.
90	Glittering	Shimmers and glows with light.
91	Molting	Sheds a thick film every morning.
92	Echoing	Sounds around the user echo.
93	Shadowless	Item and user cast no shadow.
94	Storytelling	Is inscribed with a story or knows a tale it can recite on command.
95	Chilled	Slightly cool to the touch.
96	Color-washing	User's vision shifts to a given coloration, such as sepia or monochrome.
97	Growing	Increases in size when used.
98	Floating	Slowly descends when dropped.
99	Two quirks	Roll twice on the table and apply both quirks to the item. Reroll any results of 99 or 100.
100	Three quirks	Roll three times on the table and apply all quirks to the item. Reroll any results of 99 or 100.


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INTELLIGENT ITEMS

Magic items with a mind of their own have been a hallmark of myth and fantasy for millennia. When integrated into a campaign, they can become memorable characters in their own right.

Intelligent items are a special kind of magic item that straddles the line between treasure and NPC. An intelligent item might be another type of item as well: it could be an artifact (like *Serithtial* on page 112), a cursed item (page 90), or even a relic (page 94) that grows with its wielder.

Introducing an intelligent item is an effective way to subtly alter the party dynamic. An intelligent item works well when its personality makes it a natural complement or foil for its partner: the PC investing, holding, or otherwise interacting with the item. An intelligent item that can communicate only with that particular PC is also a great way to engage players who are a bit quieter, or those slower to speak in a scene where all the PCs can talk to a particular NPC. Due to their inherently limited agency, intelligent items are at less of a risk for stealing the spotlight than other NPCs who travel along with the party.

INTELLIGENT ITEM RULES

Every intelligent item has the intelligent trait. Intelligent items can't be crafted by normal means—typically an accident, a divine act, or a major sacrifice on the part of the creator is required to grant the item the mental essence it needs for sentience, and in some rare cases the spiritual essence it needs to have a soul of its own. Because of this, intelligent items are always rare or unique. The normal statistics and rules for wearing or using an item of its type still apply to an intelligent item. In addition, intelligent items have a few statistics other items lack.

ALIGNMENT

An intelligent item always has an alignment trait, just like any other creature, even if it isn't fully sapient. Few intelligent items are capable of growing and changing their alignment and fundamental nature; most are fixed at the time of their creation.

PERCEPTION AND SENSES

An intelligent item that has any sense of the world around them has a Perception modifier. Intelligent items have only the senses listed within their entry, rather than the assumed assortment of senses that most creatures have. If an intelligent item notices something its partner doesn't, it might be able to communicate with its partner and let them know.

COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGES

Intelligent items almost always have some means of communication—an easy way to demonstrate an item's intelligence! The most common ways are via empathy, speech, and telepathy. Speech and telepathy function as they do for any creature, while an empathic connection allows the item to share only emotions. Empathic and telepathic connections are often limited either to the item's partner or to a certain distance.

If an intelligent item understands or speaks any languages, they are listed in parentheses in its Communication entry. If the item doesn't have speech listed, it can only understand the listed languages, not speak them.

SKILLS

Intelligent items might have skill modifiers for Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma-based skills that fit their nature.

ABILITY SCORES

Intelligent items have Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, though as inanimate objects, they don't have Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution entries.

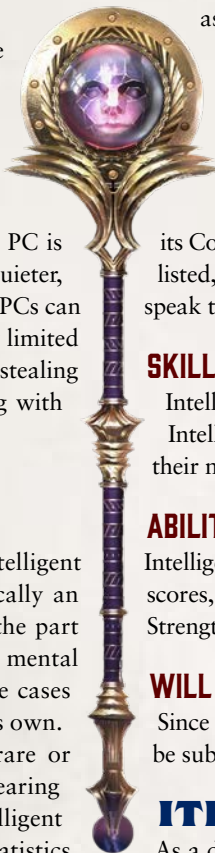
WILL SAVE

Since they have their own minds, intelligent items might be subject to mental effects that require a Will save.

ITEM AGENCY

As a default, intelligent items have control over all their own magic, meaning an intelligent magic weapon could deny the effects of its fundamental and property runes if it so chose, and intelligent items perform their own activations when they wish. Intelligent items can typically use 3 actions per turn, acting on their partner's turn. These actions don't count toward their partner's 3 actions. They have a reaction if any of their activations requires one.

Beyond denying magic effects and communicating their displeasure, intelligent items can usually influence or hinder their partners only in subtle ways. If the item is a weapon or tool necessary for an action (like thieves' tools), it can at least be disruptive enough to make its partner take a -2 circumstance penalty to associated checks, much as if the partner were using an improvised weapon or tool. If an intelligent item can have a greater effect, such as seizing control of its partner's body for a time, the intelligent item's entry includes those abilities.



DESIGNING INTELLIGENT ITEMS

When you first set out to create an intelligent item, ask yourself what role you expect the item will play in your game. Unlike any other item, the intelligent item is a character of its own and adds to the group dynamic, usually in ways similar to a minor NPC who follows the party throughout the adventure. That means it's important to have a clear role in mind. Is the item an ally in the PCs' dangerous quest? A kindred spirit and confidante? A foil for the PC? A morally ambiguous ally worth handling for its great power? Or perhaps a bit of comic relief? Once you know what you want in the item, you can develop its personality and abilities in parallel, coming up with thematic links between them.

When choosing values for the intelligent item's statistics, you'll often want to use values suitable for a creature of its level. You could use much lower values if you want to give it a weakness, but keep in mind that a low Will modifier might make it particularly easy to control, which could be a problem if it can make life miserable for its partner. Because the item can usually activate its abilities on its own, the intelligent item is essentially adding a limited additional character to the PCs' team, so consider its effect on the encounters the PCs face. For example, a high-level normal item that lets a PC cast a 3rd-level *fireball* every round might be reasonable given that it counts toward the PC's available actions, but an intelligent item is adding that *fireball* on top of everything else the PCs can do.

SPECIFIC INTELLIGENT ITEMS

The following, as well as the intelligent artifact *Serithtial* on page 112, are a few example intelligent items to get you started.

GENIUS DIADEM

ITEM 18

RARE N APEX ARCANEDIVINATION INTELLIGENT

Usage worn circlet; **Bulk** L

Perception +22; precise vision 30 feet, imprecise hearing 30 feet, constant *detect magic*

Communication speech (Common, Draconic, and eight other common languages)

Skills Arcana +34, seven Lore skills +28, Occultism +28, Society +28

Int +8, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +4

Will +24

The *genius diadem* is a *diadem of intellect* that typically acts like an arrogant professor or mentor, often boasting that it is a certified greater intellect and far superior to your own intelligence, even after the benefits the diadem grants you. The *genius diadem* encourages you to learn things for yourself rather than actually attempting to Recall Knowledge for you, though you or your allies might be able to play on its arrogance using Deception to trick it into doing so. In addition

to allowing you to activate it, the diadem can use the *diadem of intellect's* *hypercognition* activation with its own actions, though if it does so, the diadem gains the benefits instead of you. Only the diadem can use the following activation.

Activate ♦♦ (command, Interact) **Frequency** once per hour;

Effect The *genius diadem* casts 7th-level *feeblemind*.

MARTYR'S SHIELD

ITEM 7

RARE LG ABJURATION DIVINE INTELLIGENT

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** 1

Perception +12; precise vision 30 feet, imprecise hearing 30 feet

Communication speech (Common and Celestial)

Skills Diplomacy +15, Religion +13

Int +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

Will +15

A *martyr's shield* is a lesser sturdy shield imbued with the compassion of a devout champion of a righteous deity, like Iomedae or Vildeis, who sacrificed himself to save an ally. In addition to good-naturedly attempting to convert you to its religion, the *martyr's shield* can use 1 reaction each round that, when raised, it uses to Shield Block to protect an ally adjacent to you, with the effects of the Shield Warden feat (*Core Rulebook* 112). The *martyr's shield* uses this reaction whether you would prefer it did so or not. The *martyr's shield* can be upgraded to a stronger form of sturdy shield by paying the difference in cost between its current type of sturdy shield and the new type.

SINGING SWORD

ITEM 5

RARE CG ENCHANTMENT INTELLIGENT OCCULT

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** 1

Perception +11; precise vision 30 feet, imprecise hearing 30 feet

Communication speech (Common and four other common languages)

Skills Performance +15

Int +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

Will +13 (+17 against attempts to quiet its singing)

A *singing sword* is a +1 striking longsword imbued with the consciousness of a boisterous bard, and therefore constantly sings at all times. A *singing sword* can't stop singing and in fact communicates in no way other than by singing. A successful Diplomacy or Intimidation check against its Will DC can convince it to quiet its singing to a whisper for 10 minutes, or 20 minutes on a critical success, though it quickly grows displeased at anyone who attempts this repeatedly. The *singing sword* can spend its actions to attack on its own, with the effects of a *dancing weapon's* activation, except that its attack modifier is +12. Additionally, it can perform the following activations; each casts a composition spell and follows all the usual rules for compositions.

Activate ♦ (command) **Frequency** once per minute; **Effect** The *singing sword* casts *inspire courage*.

Activate ♦ (command) **Frequency** once per minute; **Effect** The *singing sword* casts *inspire defense*.

Activate ⤵ (command) **Frequency** once per hour; **Trigger** You or an ally within 60 feet rolls a saving throw against an auditory effect; **Effect** The *singing sword* casts *counter performance*.

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CURSED ITEMS

While magical items can be potent weapons in any adventurer's arsenal, magic can be unpredictable and is not always benign. Cursed items are unusual magical creations that have a malicious effect on the unwary and can force its wielders into difficult choices.

Cursed items are almost never made intentionally; even those who set out to curse an item find the task incredibly difficult or even impossible. These items are the results of magical mishaps, shoddy crafting, or sinister forces interfering with the creation. Many specify how their curses work, but curses are fickle, and you as the GM determine how curses play out in your game. Due to these factors, an item with the cursed trait is always rare.

Identifying Cursed Items: Cursed items often appear to be ordinary magical items, as the magic that warps their function also disguises their curses from detection. Unless you roll a critical success when Identifying a cursed item, it simply appears as something helpful or benign. A critical success reveals both the presence of the curse and the exact nature of the curse.

Removing Cursed Items: Many cursed items can't be discarded. Some use magic to fuse to the wielder, making it impossible to remove the item, while others attune to their owner and return even if discarded. (This section uses the term "fuse" to describe either situation.) In many cases, this feature reveals itself only after the cursed item has been triggered for the first time or after investing the item for the first time, allowing the user to develop a false sense of security. Fused cursed items can be removed by targeting the item's owner with a *remove curse* spell or similar magic. If the spell is successful, the item can be discarded, but nothing prevents the item from cursing the same creature again if the conditions are met, so it's best to dispose of the item quickly. Invested cursed items that can't be removed continue to count against a character's invested items, even without reinvesting them each day.

SPECIFIC CURSED ITEMS

The following are a few examples of cursed items.

BAG OF DEVOURING

ITEM 7+

RARE **CONJURATION** **CURSED** **EXTRADIMENSIONAL** **MAGICAL**

Usage held in 2 hands; **Bulk** 1

This item appears to be and functions as a *bag of holding*, but is actually a feeding orifice of a bizarre extradimensional creature. Any animal or vegetable matter put in the bag has a chance of triggering the bag's interest. Whenever you reach into the bag to retrieve an item or place an animal or plant

(or animal or plant product) within the bag, roll a DC 9 flat check. On a success, the bag ignores the intrusion. On a failure, the bag devours the triggering material, removing it from this realm of existence; the bag can't eat artifacts or other similarly hard-to-destroy items. If the triggering material is not entirely inside of the bag, such as when someone reaches a hand inside, the *bag of devouring* attempts to pull it completely inside the bag using a Grapple action, with an Athletics bonus determined by the type of bag. On a success, it devours the victim or object entirely.

Type I; Level 7; Athletics Bonus +15; acts as a type II *bag of holding*

Type II; Level 11; Athletics Bonus +21; acts as a type III *bag of holding*

Type III; Level 13; Athletics Bonus +24; acts as a type IV *bag of holding*



BAG OF WEASELS

ITEM 4

RARE **CONJURATION** **CURSED** **EXTRADIMENSIONAL** **MAGICAL**

Usage held in 2 hands; **Bulk** 1

This item appears to be and functions as a *type I bag of holding*, until you try to retrieve an item from the bag. Whenever you retrieve an item from the *bag of weasels*, roll a DC 11 flat check. On a success, you retrieve the item as normal. On a failure, the item you retrieve is transformed into a weasel; this doesn't affect artifacts, cursed items, or other hard-to-destroy items.

This weasel has the statistics of a giant rat (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 276), except that it is Tiny and exudes an aura of transmutation magic. The weasel has no loyalty to you and typically attempts to escape as quickly as possible. If the weasel is targeted with a *remove curse* spell or a similar magical effect, it transforms back into the original item that was taken from the *bag of weasels*. If it dies or is slain, the weasel disappears and the item is permanently destroyed. Because the weasel is a transformed item, you don't gain any benefit you would receive from attacking a creature, defeating one, damaging one, or the like, but you do gain any benefit you would gain from destroying an item.

BOOTS OF DANCING

ITEM 11

RARE **CURSED** **ENCHANTMENT** **INVESTED** **MAGICAL**

Usage worn shoes; **Bulk** L

These boots act as *greater boots of elvenkind*, but they react wildly to strong physical exertion. While you wear the boots, the curse activates whenever you attempt an Athletics check or Stride more than once in a single round during an encounter. The boots cast an 8th-level *uncontrollable dance* spell on you,

and you automatically fail your save. Once the curse has activated for the first time, the boots fuse to you.

CLOAK OF IMMOLATION

ITEM 7

RARE CURSED EVOCATION INVESTED MAGICAL

Usage worn cloak; **Bulk** L

Appearing as a magic cloak such as a *cloak of elvenkind*, this garment is made of highly volatile fabric. While wearing it, if you take fire damage, you also take 1d10 persistent fire damage. Taking fire damage while the persistent fire damage is in effect has no additional effect. You can extinguish the persistent fire damage as normal.

Any creature that hits you with a melee unarmed attack while you are taking this persistent fire damage takes fire damage equal to the persistent fire damage you took on your previous turn. Once the curse has activated for the first time, the boots fuse to you.

GLOVES OF CARELESSNESS

ITEM 7

RARE ABJURATION CURSED EXTRADIMENSIONAL INVESTED MAGICAL

Usage worn gloves; **Bulk** L

These gloves appear and function as *gloves of storing* but repel any item not stored in the gloves. When wearing them, whenever you Interact to draw or pick up an item, roll a DC 11 flat check. On a success, you do so as normal. On a failure, you instead fling the item 15 feet in a random direction. You can use a reaction to attempt a DC 23 Reflex save, causing the item to land at your feet instead if you succeed. Removing the stored item from the gloves does not trigger the item's curse. The first time the curse activates, the gloves fuse to you.

MEDUSA ARMOR

ITEM 14

RARE CURSED INVESTED MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Usage worn armor; **Bulk** 3

This +2 *adamantine scale mail* appears to have a *fortification* rune but grants none of its effects. Whenever you are critically hit, after taking damage, you become petrified for 1 round. Once the curse has activated for the first time, the armor fuses to you.

MONKEY'S PAW

ITEM 20

RARE CURSED MAGICAL MISFORTUNE NECROMANCY

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

This dried, gnarled hand is clenched in a fist, waiting for a creature to pick it up. When you pick up the *monkey's paw*, the hand opens, revealing three withered fingers. The *monkey's paw* grants you three wishes, curling one finger after every one. Once you pick up the *monkey's paw*, you cannot discard the hand until it returns to a clenched fist by casting its three wishes. Any attempts to discard the hand, even with the effects of a *miracle* or *wish* spell, are unsuccessful as the *monkey's paw* reappears among your possessions within 1d4 hours; it doesn't work for any other creature in the intervening time. The hand returns even if another creature steals it from you. Once you make

MONKEY'S PAW

all three wishes, the *monkey's paw* uses *plane shift* to travel to a random point in the multiverse.

Whenever the monkey's paw hears you utter a statement that sounds like a wish, even if you don't use the words "I wish," it activates and grants a twisted, horrifying version of your wish, producing any effect within the possibility of *alter reality*, *miracle*, *primal phenomenon*, or *wish*, and potentially a greater effect at the GM's discretion.

NECKLACE OF STRANGULATION

ITEM 15

RARE CURSED INVESTED MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Usage worn necklace; **Bulk** L

This beautiful necklace appears to be a magical item such as a *necklace of fireballs* or a *pendant of the occult*. When invested, it magically locks in place, suspiciously tightly, and fuses to you. When you enter a situation of extreme stress (as determined by the GM), the necklace tightens around your neck, suffocating you (*Core Rulebook* 478) and dealing 30 bludgeoning damage to you at the end of each of your turns. Once per round, you can spend a single action to attempt a DC 34 Athletics check or Fortitude save; success means you don't take the damage on your current turn, but you continue suffocating. The necklace loosens after you've been dead for a month.

POISONOUS CLOAK

ITEM 13+

RARE CURSED INVESTED MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Usage worn cloak; **Bulk** L

This innocuous-looking cloak is associated with a type of poison, set at the cloak's creation. It often appears as a *clandestine cloak* or a *cloak of the bat* to the unaware. When you invest this cloak, you lose any resistance to poison damage, and anytime you take piercing or slashing damage in combat, you are exposed to the type of poison associated with the *poisonous cloak* with no onset, even if it's not an injury poison. Once the curse has activated for the first time, the cloak fuses to you.

Type I; Level 6; Poison giant scorpion venom

Type II; Level 10; Poison wolfsbane

Type III; Level 13; Poison purple worm venom

Type IV; Level 17; Poison hemlock

RING OF TRUTH

ITEM 10

RARE CURSED ENCHANTMENT INVESTED MAGICAL

Usage worn; **Bulk** –

This ring appears to be a *ring of lies*, but when invested, close investigation reveals angelic wings and divine creatures hidden on the face of the ring. When you invest the ring, you are rendered unable to tell a deliberate lie, in either speech or writing. If you attempt to omit the truth or phrase things truthfully but deceptively, roll a DC 11 flat check; on a failure, the ring itself blurts out the entire truth (as you believe it) as an answer. Keeping silent does not activate the ring's curse. Once the curse has activated for the first time, the ring fuses to you.

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STONE OF WEIGHT

ITEM 2

RARE **CONJURATION** **CURSED** **MAGICAL**
Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Also known as a loadstone, this small stone appears non-magical and has a lovely sheen, giving the impression that it could be a valuable or a notable item or a magic stone of some kind. When you've carried the stone on your person for 1 minute, its curse activates: the stone's size does not change, but it suddenly increases in weight to 5 Bulk. This additional weight does not cause the stone to deal more damage if thrown or used as a weapon. It reappears in your possessions within 1 minute if you discard it, and can't be destroyed or thrown away permanently, or even placed in a container that would reduce or negate its Bulk (like a *bag of holding*), until it is subject to a *remove curse* spell or similar magic effect.

Once the curse has activated for the first time, the stone fuses to you.

ITEM CURSES

Most curses alter a base item. Item curses alter their base item, much like a property rune, though they can't be detected or identified unless a creature critically succeeds at a check to Identify the Item. A curse can be applied to the specific types of magic items listed in its Usage entry. Curses typically can't be removed or transferred from the item, though at your discretion, either might be possible after the curse is broken. If the PCs manage to break the curse, the newly uncursed item could be quite valuable.

ARROW ATTRACTING

CURSE 8

RARE **ABJURATION** **CURSED** **MAGICAL**

Usage curses armor or shield

An item affected by an *arrow attracting* curse protects you normally, but it draws ranged attacks like a magnet. Whenever a creature within 120 feet misses with a ranged attack, it must immediately reroll the attack against your AC, affecting you depending on the result of the new attack roll. The *arrow attraction* curse activates only if you could have been a legitimate target. Creatures that intentionally attempt to miss a ranged attack do not activate an *arrow attraction* curse. Once the curse has activated for the first time, the item fuses to you.

ARSONOUS

CURSE 7

RARE **CURSED** **EVOCATION** **FIRE** **MAGICAL**

Usage curses a ring, staff, or wand

An *arsonous* curse creates flaws in the mystic pathways that channel magic through an item, allowing excess power to escape as sparks. Whenever you activate the magic item, a random ally within 30 feet takes 1d10 persistent fire damage. If no ally is in range, you take the damage instead. At the GM's discretion, this curse might ignite an unattended object or the surrounding environment instead.

BACKBITING

CURSE 4

RARE **CURSED** **EVOCATION** **MAGICAL**

Usage curses a weapon

A weapon with the *backbiting* curse warps space in response to catastrophic mishaps. Whenever you critically fail at a Strike with this weapon, the weapon curls around (or its projectile swerves through the air) to strike you in the back as though you hit yourself, automatically dealing maximum damage to you.

BLOODBITER

CURSE 6

RARE **CURSED** **MAGICAL** **NECROMANCY**

Usage curses a piercing or slashing weapon

A *bloodbiter* weapon is awakened by violence and fueled by blood. When you make a successful attack with the weapon, it inflicts a wound that deals 1d6 persistent bleed damage (in addition to its normal damage), but it also deals 1d6 persistent bleed damage to you. The curse remains



POISONOUS CLOAK

dormant until the weapon hits a creature, at which point black thorns protrude from the weapon and dig into your body; the weapon fuses to you and you can't use the hand that holds the weapon for any other purpose. If the weapon is two-handed, it attaches itself to only a single hand (GM's choice).

DEGENERATING

CURSE 5

RARE ACID CURSED NECROMANCY MAGICAL

Usage curses a weapon

Failure makes the weapon crumble. Whenever you critically fail an attack roll with the weapon, the *degenerating* curse deals 1d10 acid damage to the weapon, ignoring its Hardness and resistances.

DEPENDENT

CURSE 9

RARE CURSED MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Usage curses gear used for skills or a weapon

The *dependent* curse makes an item function properly only under certain circumstances. Whenever you use the item to perform a skill check or use the weapon in combat, your degree of success is one worse than the result you rolled unless those specific conditions are met. The most common types of *dependent* curses are nocturnal or diurnal—functioning normally only at night or only during the day, respectively—but more restrictive curses do exist, such as a curse that restricts the item's use to underground or a curse that allows the item to function effectively only during autumn.

DREARY

CURSE 3

RARE CONJURATION CURSED MAGICAL

Usage curses armor

When you invest this armor, a personal-sized cloud appears over your head and begins to rain on you, and the armor fuses to you. This extinguishes uncovered flames and soaks other objects you are carrying or holding, potentially ruining them. Cold conditions are one step worse under the cloud, and at the GM's discretion it might cause other problems, such as interfering with sleep.

ERRATIC TRANSPOSING

CURSE 11

RARE CONJURATION CURSED MAGICAL

Usage curses a weapon

This curse bursts with uncontrolled teleportation magic when activated, unreliably transporting creatures across the battlefield. On a critical hit with the affected weapon, you and an ally within 60 feet (chosen randomly) teleport to switch places with one another. If either of the affected creatures is unable to entirely fit within its new space, the creature is placed in the nearest available squares instead.

GRANDSTANDING

CURSE 11

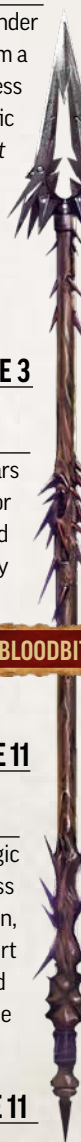
RARE CURSED ENCHANTMENT MAGICAL

Usage curses a weapon

Weapons with the *grandstanding* curse inspire overconfidence



RING OF TRUTH



BLOODBITER

in their wielders, demanding style over pragmatism. Whenever you reduce a foe to 0 Hit Points, you lose all remaining actions on your turn, as you are compelled to flourish, gloat, pose, or otherwise waste your time in response.

OVERDRAMATIC

CURSE 5

RARE CURSED EVOCATION MAGICAL

Usage curses a weapon

The weapon flashes excessive light with each attack.

On a critical hit with the weapon, you are blinded until the end of your turn and take the effects of a *faerie fire* spell until the start of your next turn.

RAUCOUS

CURSE 3

RARE CURSED MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Usage curses gear or a weapon

While more annoying than deadly, a *raucous* curse is the bane of subtlety. Whenever you use the affected item, you must loudly yell what you are attempting to do with it, ruining any attempts at stealth. Failure to announce your action or speak at an appropriate volume automatically causes the attempted action to become a critical failure.

RAVENOUS

CURSE 1

RARE CURSED EVOCATION MAGICAL

Usage curses a ring, staff, or wand

A *ravenous* curse draws power from the wielder's body. Whenever you activate the item, you become incredibly hungry and immediately begin to starve (*Core Rulebook* 500). You require 10 times as much food as normal for the next day.

STAINING

CURSE 1

RARE CURSED MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Usage curses gear or a weapon

This property is associated with a specific color, which is defined at the time of the curse's creation. Whenever you use the affected equipment while taking a manipulate action with another object, the second object is permanently stained the associated color. For instance, if you used a set of yellow *staining lockpicks* to open a door, the lock would permanently become yellow. This color change does not otherwise unnaturally persist and can be changed via any normal mundane or magical means.

WITHERING

CURSE 13

RARE CURSED MAGICAL NECROMANCY

Usage curses a ring, staff, or wand

A *withering* curse shrivels vulnerable flesh. Whenever you activate the item, one of your fingers turns black and falls off. You take a -1 status penalty to Thievery checks and Dexterity-based attack rolls with a hand missing two or three fingers; if you lose more than four fingers on one hand, you can't use that hand to hold objects or use manipulate actions. These fingers can be replaced by magic but are otherwise gone forever. The GM has the final say on how creatures with unusual appendages or numbers of fingers are affected by this curse.

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RELICS

Some extraordinary magic items grow in power along with a character, gaining abilities that add to an adventurer's legend. These are called relics, and owning one can define a character more than any other magic item could.

Relics begin as a simple item, called a relic seed, which is little more than a functional item with a minor magical effect associated with it. As the owner of the relic grows in power, so does the relic. It develops gifts, which are new magical abilities and activations. These abilities might be themed to the relic, the character, or the nature of the campaign. If a relic is passed to another character, this process begins anew, sometimes granting the same abilities again over time, but possibly unlocking entirely new powers. If someone else takes the relic from its owner, it usually works for a while, though it might lose its power incrementally over time if not returned to its owner. How the relic changes in such a circumstance is up to you, and should fit the story.

The decision to add relics to the game is entirely up to you as the GM. If you decide to add them, you'll need to adjust treasure somewhat. It's also wise to consider how many players you expect to end up with relics. Will they

each get one? Or will there be just one or two tied to the theme of the campaign?

DISCOVERING A RELIC

Some relics might begin as ordinary items with a rich history. They might be part of a character's starting gear, only to have their true powers uncovered later during play. Other relics can be acquired during play as part of the ongoing story. Regardless of their origin, these powerful items might not appear to be much at first, but they contain the potential to become something truly great.

For example, an old, tarnished amulet found around the neck of a buried king might turn out to be an item of deep historical significance that awakens to great power. The seemingly ordinary family sword, passed down to each new generation, might unlock hidden potential through the deeds of its owner.

The PCs might immediately recognize a relic for its ability, or they might carry it for a time before its true nature becomes apparent. The story of a relic should be a tale of discovery. At first, a relic's wielder likely does not fully understand the item's power, or might be unable to use it, learning of its abilities only after a momentous event or fortuitous breakthrough. Ultimately, relics are powerful tools in service of the story, working as a valuable tie to the narrative, but their growth and development are in your hands. Because of the place relics hold in the story, they aren't available for purchase, nor can they be crafted.

Pay attention to the characters' backstories for potential relics, and look for spots in your narrative that might be suitable for campaign relics. If you're planning to use relics in your game, let the players know in advance, since their ideas and plans can guide you and give them greater investment in the relics.

BACKGROUND RELICS

A background relic is tied to the history of a character, and its form and abilities should draw inspiration from the story of their character's life or the past of the item.

The relic could be a gift from a friend or mentor, an heirloom from the character's family, a found object from their upbringing, or even the first item they ever crafted. The player should select the form of the relic (a battered longsword, a copper ring, or a threadbare red cloak, for example).

CAMPAIGN RELICS

A campaign relic is drawn from the ongoing story of the campaign. You decide the entirety of the item, from its



form to its aspects (described below) as part of the story of the campaign. Use campaign relics to reinforce and foreshadow the themes of your game. Relics come to those who need them to do great deeds, after all, so finding a relic with the perfect aspects for your future challenges is entirely likely. Unlike background relics, campaign relics typically have magical abilities when first found.

RELIC ASPECTS

Each relic is associated with aspects—typically two—that speak to its overall concept and purpose. The individual gifts each have an associated aspect. You should almost always select gifts that have an aspect matching one of those found on the relic. For example, a brass dagger recovered from the City of Brass might have the fire and mind aspects, which means that it could have the flare bolt gift (which has the fire aspect), but not the rolling geode gift (which has the earth aspect).

Usually you can determine at least one aspect of a relic easily by looking at the history of the item or personality of the character. For example, if a player decides that their background relic is a rusty mace wielded by the character's great grandmother in battle against rising undead hordes, the mace might have the life aspect, as it was used to slay countless undead creatures. There's no harm in letting the player choose an aspect for a background relic; through play, the item will reveal another aspect associated with it. In the previous example, the mace might reveal itself to have powers against demons as well, in which case its aspects might be celestial and life.

ADVANCING A RELIC

As a relic's bearer performs mighty deeds and advances their story, the relic gets stronger. The most basic advancement for a relic is its level, which always matches that of its owner. Weapons and armor can gain fundamental runes normally. You decide what, if any, property runes can be added to a given relic; by default, they can't have property runes, like any other specific item.

The more complex advancement comes from gifts. Table 2-22: Relic Gifts shows the typical number of gifts a relic should have at a given level, but relics don't follow this strictly. Rather, gifts arise according to the pace of the story, the needs of the campaign, and the relationship between the character and the relic. Generally speaking, this results in a relic gaining one gift for every 4 levels its bearer has, but this might fluctuate as the campaign progresses. For example, a relic might gain its first gift at 4th level after the bearer defeats a powerful foe. It might then gain its second at 7th, after they perform a special ritual. That same relic might not gain another gift until 13th level and then again at 16th as the player reaches other major milestones.

The gift types—minor, major, and grand—indicate their general power level. Again, the table indicates what's generally appropriate at certain levels, but you can alter them

as you see fit. You should usually avoid giving a minor gift at 10th level or higher, because it just won't be that impressive, though some of them scale well enough to be interesting at higher levels. The Gold Piece Equivalent entry for each gift helps you determine how much you should reduce treasure when using relics (see Adjusting Treasure below).

TABLE 2-22: RELIC GIFTS

Number of Gifts	Minimum Level	Gift Type	Gold Piece Equivalent
1	1st	Minor	20 gp
2	5th	Minor	160 gp
3	9th	Major	700 gp
4	13th	Major	3,000 gp
5	17th	Grand	15,000 gp

You decide what gifts a relic gains, generally by either selecting a single gift or offering two paths for the relic to grow and allowing the player to choose, but this should be informed by the story and the nature of the character bearing the relic. A relic should complement the bearer, bolstering the bearer's strengths and helping to overcome their weaknesses. Within that framework, you should try to maintain a cohesive theme for the relic.

ADJUSTING TREASURE

When you incorporate relics into your game, you can adjust the treasure gained by the party down to account for the relics increasing in power. Essentially, some of the treasure from Table 10-9: Party Treasure by Level on page 509 of the *Core Rulebook* should be replaced with relic seeds and gifts instead. You can use the relic's minimum level, replacing a permanent item of that level, or you can use the gp equivalent. Keep in mind that relic gifts are often a little more powerful than other items with the same Price even when they start out, and they often scale without any additional costs, so PCs with relics will usually be a bit more powerful.

If you prefer, you can grant relics in addition to other rewards. This means PCs will be much more powerful, but you're rewarding their investment in the story.

MAKING RELIC SEEDS

A relic seed can be quite simple: imagine a standard item with two aspects and an appearance that matches the theme. You can also use an existing magic item for a campaign relic; pick two aspects for it, and tweak its appearance or characteristics to make it clearly different from other items of its type. You can choose a tradition for the seed and apply that trait to the seed and all the gifts of the seed. This tradition might be derived from the background of the item, or it might appear or change through story moments involving the relic.

If you want a relic to have an additional special benefit, you can design it to grant a bonus to a skill, typically a +1 item bonus for a 3rd-level relic.

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PLAYER-DRIVEN RELICS

Though these rules assume you as the GM are providing relic gifts as a form of treasure with input from the players, you can instead have the players make all the decisions for their relics. Encourage the players to choose different styles of items and aspects to match their characters' themes, rather than simply choosing the most powerful combination of options. Have players describe how their relic gets more powerful in the story. What acts from previous sessions lent the relic power? What special meditations or practices did they perform to unlock new gifts? How does it feel to have the relic grow?

As the item and the character level up, the player chooses which gifts the item gets from the list as a part of character advancement. You still adjust treasure as normal for incorporating relics into your game. In fact, if the player tries to optimize the combinations, they will likely be more powerful than under the standard method.

RELIC GIFTS

Gifts are divided up into three tiers. Minor gifts grant useful, often scaling abilities and are available early in a character's career. Major gifts define a relic, determining its true purpose and granting powerful abilities. Grand gifts are the pinnacle of power, and most relics never have more than one.

The more gifts there are of one aspect, the more the relic reflects that aspect, and the more influence the aspect has on the character who wields it. An item with multiple shadow gifts might begin to lose its color. With four or five, the character that wields it might take on an ashen tone and the relic might become entirely made of shadow.

GIFT SAVES AND SPELL ATTACK ROLLS

Many gifts allow for a saving throw or have other abilities that change as the relic goes up in level. The DC for any saving throw called for by a gift is its owner's class DC or spell DC. The spell attack modifier of a gift is 10 lower than that DC. A relic's counteract modifier is equal to its owner's counteract modifier.

AIR GIFTS

DEADLY SPARK

MINOR GIFT

AIR **ELECTRICITY** **EVOCATION**

Aspect air

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact; **Effect** A spark flashes out from the relic toward a creature within 20 feet. This spark deals 1d12 electricity damage (basic Reflex save). The damage increases by 1d12 at 6th level and by another 1d12 every 4 levels thereafter.

FEATHER STEPS

MINOR GIFT

AIR **TRANSMUTATION**

Aspect air; **Prerequisites** The relic is a worn item.

While wearing the relic, you do not trigger traps that use weight or pressure plates as a trigger. Also, whenever you fall, you

reduce the falling damage by the level of the relic. If this would reduce the falling damage to 0, you land on your feet and are not prone. The relic grants a +1 item bonus to Athletics checks made to Jump, increasing to +2 at 9th level and +3 at 17th level.

WIND BARRIER

MINOR GIFT

ABJURATION **AIR**

Aspect air

Activate ♦ command; **Effect** An invisible barrier of air deflects ranged attacks, granting you a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against ranged attacks until the beginning of your next turn. At 13th level, this increases to a +3 circumstance bonus to AC against ranged attacks.

LIGHTNING STORM

MAJOR GIFT

AIR **ELECTRICITY** **EVOCATION**

Aspect air

Activate ♦♦ command; **Effect** The relic surrounds you with a storm of wind, rain, and lightning in a 30-foot emanation. This storm is difficult terrain for creatures other than you. Any creature other than you that enters or starts its turn in the storm takes 1d12 electricity damage, with a basic Reflex save (2d12 damage at 15th level). You can Sustain this Activation up to 1 minute.

PROPELLING WINDS

MAJOR GIFT

AIR **TRANSMUTATION**

Aspect air

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact; **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** The relic casts *fly* targeting you.

LIVING STORM

GRAND GIFT

AIR **ELECTRICITY** **EVOCATION**

Aspect air

The relic grants you a fly Speed equal to your Speed or 60 feet, whichever is greater. In addition, a creature that Strikes you with a melee attack takes 5 electricity damage, and you can cast 5th-level *lightning bolt* as an innate spell.

BEAST GIFTS

BEAST SENSES

MINOR GIFT

TRANSMUTATION

Aspect beast; **Prerequisites** The relic is a worn item.

The relic grants you an animal's acute senses as long as you wear it. You gain low-light vision. If you already have low-light vision, you instead gain darkvision. At 10th level, the relic grants you imprecise scent with a range of 10 feet.

CALL OF THE WILD

MINOR GIFT

TRANSMUTATION

Aspect beast

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Your relic summons a creature to fight at your side, casting *summon animal* with a level of half the item's level rounded up. You can Sustain this Activation as you would the spell.

RUNES AS GIFTS

You can substitute runes for gifts. If you choose to allow property runes on the relic, you'll want them to take up rune slots. Otherwise, you can give as many or few as you prefer, just like any other gifts. Runes are sorted into minor, major, and grand categories, but you should use their normal level and Price when you adjust treasure, instead of the number and levels on the Table 2-22. If you're using the player-driven relics variant, it's recommended you do not include this option.

AIR

Armor (Major) *energy-resistant or greater energy-resistant (cold or electricity), invisibility*; **Armor (Grand)** *ethereal*
Weapon (Minor) *returning*; **Weapon (Major)** *dancing, shock, thundering*; **Weapon (Grand)** *greater shock, greater thundering*

CELESTIAL

Weapon (Major) *anarchic (azata-themed), axiomatic (archon-themed), holy*

DEATH

Weapon (Minor) *ghost touch, wounding*

EARTH

Armor (Minor) *energy-resistant or greater energy-resistant (acid)*; **Armor (Major)** *fortification*; **Armor (Grand)** *greater fortification*
Weapon (Minor) *shifting*

FIEND

Armor (Minor) *energy-resistant or greater energy-resistant (acid, cold, or fire)*
Weapon (Major) *anarchic (demon-themed), axiomatic (devil-themed), unholy*

FIRE

Armor (Minor) *energy-resistant or greater energy-resistant (fire)*
Weapon (Minor) *flaming*; **Weapon (Major)** *greater flaming*

LIFE

Weapon (Minor) *disrupting*; **Weapon (Major)** *greater disrupting*

MIND

Armor (Minor) *glamered*; **Armor (Major)** *invisibility*

PLANT

Weapon (Minor) *shifting*

SHADOW

Armor (Minor) *shadow*; **Armor (Major)** *greater shadow*; **Armor (Grand)** *ethereal, major shadow*

WATER

Armor (Minor) *energy-resistant or greater energy-resistant (cold or fire), slick*; **Armor (Major)** *greater or major slick*
Weapon (Minor) *shifting*

FERAL CLAWS

MINOR GIFT

MORPH TRANSMUTATION

Aspect *beast*; **Prerequisites** The relic is a worn item.

Activate command; **Effect** Your hands transform into a pair of claws. These grant you a claw unarmed attack that deals 1d6 slashing damage and has the agile and finesse traits. This lasts until you Dismiss the effect.

FORM OF FURY

MAJOR GIFT

TRANSMUTATION

Aspect *beast*; **Prerequisites** The relic is a worn item.

Activate command, envision; **Frequency** twice per day; **Effect** Calling upon the bestial nature within, you change shape into that of an animal. The relic casts *animal form* on you, transforming you into the same type of animal every time, chosen when the gift is gained; the spell level is half the item's level, rounded down.

At 11th level, the spell is 5th level, and the spell level goes up by 1 for every 2 levels beyond that.

TRACK OF THE BEAST

MAJOR GIFT

TRANSMUTATION

Aspect *beast*

The spirit of an animal fills you. The relic gives one of the following benefits, chosen by the GM when the relic gains this gift.

- A +10-foot status bonus to your land Speed.
- A climb Speed equal to your land Speed.
- A swim Speed equal to your land Speed.

FORM OF VENGEANCE

GRAND GIFT

TRANSMUTATION

Aspect *beast*; **Prerequisites** form of fury gift

Whenever you use the relic's form of fury activation, it can cast *aerial form* or *dinosaur form* instead of *animal form*. Like form of fury, these spells also turn you into the same type of animal each time (so you have three forms you can assume in total, one from each spell). The spell level is the same as defined in form of fury.

While transformed, you can switch from one of the three forms to another by Sustaining the Activation. This doesn't change the duration.

CELESTIAL GIFTS

DIVINE RETRIBUTION

MINOR GIFT

EVOCATION

Aspect *celestial*; **Prerequisites** The relic is a weapon.

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Activate ♦♦ command; **Effect** Drawing upon divine fury, you single out a target that damaged you or an ally within the past round and fill your relic with divine vengeance against them. Make a Strike against that foe, dealing an additional damage die on a hit. If the target is evil, it is also enfeebled 1 until the start of your next turn on a hit (or enfeebled 2 on a critical hit).

HEAVEN'S GRACE MINOR GIFT

ABJURATION

Aspect celestial; **Prerequisites** The relic is a worn item.

The heavens protect you from harm. While wearing the relic, you gain a +1 status bonus to AC against attacks by fiends and resistance to an energy type corresponding to the relic's celestial origin (such as sonic resistance from a choral angel). The resistance is equal to half the relic's level (minimum 1).

WORD OF FAITH MINOR GIFT

HEALING NECROMANCY POSITIVE

Aspect celestial

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact;

Frequency once per hour; **Effect** Placing your hand on yourself or an ally, you heal their wounds and bolster their spirit. The target regains 1d8 HP per item level and reduces their frightened value by 1.

HOLY LIGHT MAJOR GIFT

EVOCATION GOOD

Aspect celestial

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact; **Effect** Your relic shines with holy light. This creates bright light in a 30-foot emanation around the item. Evil creatures in the area are frightened 1, and can't lower their frightened value below 1 as long as they remain in the light. Fiends in the area increase any weakness to good damage they have by 5. You can Sustain this Activation for up to 1 minute.

RIGHTEOUS CALL MAJOR GIFT

EVOCATION GOOD

Aspect celestial

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Holy magic fills your armaments, making them true weapons against evil. For 1 minute, your weapons and unarmed attacks gain the *holy* weapon rune while you hold them. If a weapon is at its limit on property runes, you can choose one property rune on the weapon to go dormant while the *holy* rune takes effect. In addition, any successful Strikes your allies make while they're within 30 feet of you deal 1 additional good damage.



ANGELIC VESSEL

CONJURATION GOOD

Aspect celestial

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** At your invitation, a celestial imbues your body with the divine. You gain 50 additional Hit Points, increasing both your maximum and current Hit Points, as well as weakness 10 to evil damage. If the relic has the righteous call gift, this activation grants the effects of that gift as well, without expending its daily use.

You can Dismiss the effect.

If you do, you can unleash a wave of holy power, causing the relic to cast an 8th-level *divine decree*, choosing good for the alignment.

DEATH GIFTS

DEATH GAZE MINOR GIFT

NECROMANCY NEGATIVE

Aspect death

Activate ♦♦ envision, Interact; **Effect** Your stare causes a creature's flesh to rot and wither away. Target a creature you can see within 30 feet. Your stare deals 1d6 negative damage to the creature for every 2 levels the relic has (minimum 1d6; basic Fortitude save). An undead creature or other creature with negative healing targeted this way is instead healed 1d6 HP per level of the relic and is temporarily immune to this effect for 10 minutes.

LIVING DEATH MINOR GIFT

NECROMANCY

Aspect death

You stand on the threshold between the living and the dead. If you attempt a saving throw against an effect that would deal negative damage to you, such as *harm*, your outcome is one degree of success better than what you rolled. If you roll a critical success and the effect is capable of healing undead, you regain HP equal to half the spell's full

damage. Any positive spell or effect that would heal you has only half the normal effect. All these effects apply only if you are a living creature.

SHROUD OF THE AFTERLIFE MINOR GIFT

NECROMANCY NEGATIVE

Aspect death

Activate ♦ command, Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You shroud yourself with powers from beyond the living realm for 1 minute. While this shroud is active, you

take on a pallid appearance and gain poison resistance equal to half the relic's level and a +1 status bonus to saving throws against death effects, diseases, effects that would make you paralyzed, poison, and sleep effects. In addition, the DC for your recovery checks is 9 + your dying value instead of 10 + your dying value.

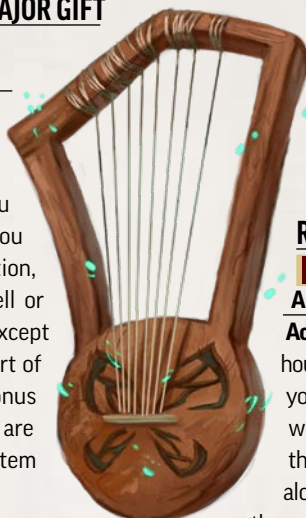
PIERCE THE VEIL

NECROMANCY

Aspect death; **Prerequisites** living death gift

The relic allows you to pierce the veil between life and death. While you are holding or wearing the relic, you have the negative healing ability (as though you were undead; positive energy harms you and negative energy heals you). In addition, whenever you are healed by a negative spell or effect, you gain resistance 5 to all damage (except force, ghost touch, and positive) until the start of your next turn. Finally, you gain a +2 item bonus to all saves against death effects while you are the bearer of the relic; this increases to a +3 item bonus at 13th level.

MAJOR GIFT



TIDE OF DEATH

NECROMANCY NEGATIVE

Aspect death; **Prerequisites** death gaze gift

You can Activate death gaze with 3 actions instead of 2. If you do, it targets all living creatures within 30 feet except for you. If you have the negative healing ability, you can include yourself to be healed.

MAJOR GIFT

GRIM SPECTER

NECROMANCY

Aspect death

Activate ♦♦ command, envision; **Frequency** once per day;

Effect You can call upon the terrifying powers that fuel your relic to transform yourself into a specter of death. You become incorporeal, having no physical body. You are immune to effects that require a physical body, including precision damage as well as exposure to most diseases and poisons. You also have resistance to all damage equal to half the relic's level; force damage, *ghost touch* attacks, negative damage, and positive damage ignore this resistance, and the resistance doubles against non-magical damage.

You can move through solid objects. When inside an object, you can't perceive, attack, or Interact with anything outside it, and you're always slowed 1 on turns you start in an object. Corporeal creatures can pass through you but can't end their movement in your space. You can't attempt Strength-based checks against corporeal creatures or objects, unless those objects have the *ghost touch* property rune. Likewise, corporeal creatures can't attempt Strength-based checks against you.

You can Sustain the Activation up to 1 minute.

GRAND GIFT

EARTH GIFTS

EASE BURDEN

EARTH TRANSMUTATION

Aspect earth

Your relic draws strength from the earth underfoot to lighten your load. As long as your relic is on your person and you are standing on the ground, you can carry 1 more Bulk than normal before becoming encumbered, and you increase your maximum Bulk by 2. At 6th level and every 4 levels thereafter, increase the Bulk you can carry before becoming encumbered by 1 and your maximum Bulk by 2.

MINOR GIFT

ROLLING GEODE

CONJURATION EARTH

Aspect earth

Activate ♦♦ command, envision; **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** Stone and crystal form a sphere that chases your foes. You create a geode in an unoccupied square within 30 feet. You can spend a single action, which has the concentrate trait, to move the geode up to 30 feet along the ground. If the geode enters a creature's space, the creature must succeed at a basic Reflex save or take 2d6 bludgeoning damage; a creature can take damage this way only once per turn, even if you roll the geode through its space multiple times. The geode persists for up to 1 minute or until destroyed or Dismissed; it has AC 5, Hardness 10, and 40 Hit Points, and is immune to critical hits and precision damage.

MINOR GIFT

SHATTERED EARTH

EARTH EVOCATION

Aspect earth

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact; **Frequency** once per hour;

Effect Seismic pulses from your relic ripple through the nearby ground, shaking sharp fragments to the surface. A 10-foot-radius patch of stone or earth within 60 feet is transformed into difficult terrain. A creature that enters an affected square during a move action must succeed at an Acrobatics check or Reflex save or take 1d6 piercing damage; it needs to roll only once per move action even if it moves through several squares. At 6th level and every 4 levels thereafter, increase the damage by 1d6.

MINOR GIFT

RAISE RAMPARTS

CONJURATION EARTH

Aspect earth

Activate ♦♦♦ command, Interact; **Frequency** once per day;

Effect Your relic reshapes the earth around you. You cast 5th-level *wall of stone*.

MAJOR GIFT

UNDERGROUND BOUNTY

CONJURATION EARTH

Aspect earth

Your relic produces metals and stones to empower your weapons. Each day during your daily preparations, your

MAJOR GIFT

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relic conjures a magical shard of silver, cold iron, gold, or a non-precious stone or metal material of your choice (such as bronze or granite). If your relic is a weapon, it immediately absorbs the shard, causing it to gain a magical sheen of that metal or stone until your next daily preparations. If your relic is not a weapon, the shard is not immediately used, and you can touch it to a stone or metal weapon using an Interact action to give it a magical sheen of that metal or stone for 10 minutes. While coated in the magical sheen, the weapon interacts with weaknesses, resistances, and the like as if it were made of the stone or metal from the shard rather than its own. The sheen and the shard are obviously magical in nature, and if you don't use the shard, it disappears when you make your next daily preparations. At 17th level, add adamantine and mithral to the available options.

LIVING STATUE GRAND GIFT

EARTH **TRANSMUTATION**

Aspect earth

Your relic's energies have given you control over the boundary between flesh and stone. You can cast 6th-level *flesh to stone* and *stone to flesh* as innate spells, each once per day. As long as you are standing on the earth, your body reflexively petrifies at the moment you are struck, granting you resistance 5 to physical damage (except adamantine). This increases to 8 in caves or subterranean environments.

FIEND GIFTS

CURSE WOUND MINOR GIFT

CURSE **EVIL** **NECROMANCY**

Aspect fiend; **Prerequisites** The relic is a weapon.

Activate command; **Trigger** Your Strike with your relic deals damage to a creature within 60 feet; **Effect** The evil within your relic curses an enemy's wound to ensure they won't heal. The triggering creature must attempt a Will save or be unable to restore the Hit Points lost by damage from the triggering Strike until its next daily preparations. If you use Curse Wound on a creature already affected by your Curse Wound, your previous application expires.

FIENDISH DEFIANCE MINOR GIFT

ABJURATION

Aspect fiend; **Prerequisites** The relic is a worn item.

The fiendish power of your relic offers you more protection against celestials and allows you to ignore harm. While wearing the relic, you gain a +1 status bonus to AC against attacks by celestials and resistance to an energy type corresponding to the relic's fiendish origin (such as fire resistance from a devil). The resistance is equal to half the relic's level (minimum 1).

LITTLE HELPER

MINOR GIFT

DIVINATION **EVIL**

Aspect fiend

Your relic awakens to sapience, developing a personality (usually one that clashes with your own). Your relic has an alignment corresponding to the type of fiend associated with the item, precise vision and imprecise hearing each out to 30 feet, the ability to understand and speak one language you know, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma modifiers of +0. Your item's total Perception and Will modifiers are equal to your proficiency modifiers in Perception and Will, respectively. It is trained in the Lore associated with its fiend type (such as Demon Lore), for a total modifier of 2 + the relic's level. Unlike most intelligent items, the relic has no actions or reactions and can't use any of its own activations.



FIENDISH BARGAIN

MAJOR GIFT

DIVINATION **EVIL**

Aspect fiend

Activate command; **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** You bargain with the evil force empowering your relic for a boon, though you must trade something in return. Select one of the following benefits to gain.

- Your relic attempts to counteract a harmful condition affecting you.
- You regain 3d8+16 Hit Points. This is a healing effect.
- You gain a +2 status bonus to attack rolls for 1 minute.

One of the following randomly determined effects occurs to you in payment, after applying the benefit.

- You are stupefied 1 for 1 minute.
- You are clumsy 1 for 1 minute.
- You lose 1d8 Hit Points.
- You take a -1 penalty to damage rolls for 1 minute.



PROFANE FERVOR

MAJOR GIFT

EVIL **EVOCATION**

Aspect fiend

Activate command, Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Profane energies twist your weapons, filling them with rage toward everything good.

For 1 minute, your weapons and unarmed attacks gain the *unholy* weapon rune while you hold them. If a weapon is at its limit on property runes, you can choose one property rune on the weapon to go dormant while the *unholy* rune takes effect. In addition, successful Strikes your allies make while they're within 30 feet of you deal 1 additional evil damage.

COMMAND LEGION

GRAND GIFT

CONJURATION

Aspect fiend

Activate command, envision; **Frequency** once per day;

Effect Your relic opens a gate within itself, overwhelming your enemies with fiends. You cast 6th-level *summon fiend*, but summon two fiends instead of one, and you can command them both with 1 action to Sustain a Spell. If the relic has the profane fervor gift, this activation grants the effects of that gift as well, without expending its daily use. For the next minute, you can use the following activation.

Activate ♦ envision; **Trigger** One of the fiends summoned by command legion is banished; **Effect** You summon that same fiend again in an adjacent space. The fiend returns at full Hit Points and all conditions, spells, and other effects on it end before you summon it again. However, it does not recover any limited-use abilities it used before, such as innate spells or abilities with a Frequency entry.

FIRE GIFTS

FLARE BOLT

MINOR GIFT

EVOCATION FIRE

Aspect fire

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact; **Effect** A bolt of flames scorches out from the relic. Make a spell attack roll with your relic against a target within 30 feet. The bolt deals 1d6 fire damage for every 2 levels the relic has (minimum 1d6).

Critical Success The bolt deals double damage, as well as persistent fire damage equal to the level of the relic.

Success The bolt deals full damage.

HEAT HAZE

MINOR GIFT

ABJURATION FIRE

Aspect fire

Your relic's heat keeps the air around you pleasantly warm. While you are holding or wearing the relic, it protects you from severe environmental cold. At 9th level, it also protects you from extreme cold, and at 17th level, it protects you from incredible cold. At 4th level, the relic also gains the following activation.

Activate ♦♦ command, envision; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Your relic erratically elevates the air temperature around you, creating heat shimmers that distort your appearance and grant you the concealed condition for 1 minute. As the nature of this effect still leaves your location obvious, you can't use this concealment to Hide or Sneak.

INCANDESCENT SIGHT

MINOR GIFT

DIVINATION FIRE

Aspect fire

Activate ♦♦ command, envision; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Your eyes become attuned to heat signatures as your vision extends into the infrared, granting you a heatsight precise sense for 1 minute. Your heatsight can see

temperature gradients out to a range of 30 feet, allowing you to detect living creatures and warm objects even in the dark. Warm objects block your heatsight even if they are transparent, such as hot water.

JET PROPULSION

MAJOR GIFT

EVOCATION FIRE

Aspect fire

Activate ♦ envision; **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** Flames from your relic channel through your body, erupting from your feet, hands, or other limbs with enough force to blast you across the ground and propel you through the air. For 1 minute, you gain a +10-foot status bonus to your Speed and gain a fly Speed equal to your new Speed or 20 feet, whichever is greater. You must end your turn on solid ground, or you fall.

SEARING WAVE

MAJOR GIFT

EVOCATION FIRE

Aspect fire

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact; **Effect** You allow a portion of the fire magic housed in your relic to escape in a direction of your choice. You deal 1d10 fire damage for every 2 levels of the relic to all creatures in a 30-foot cone (basic Reflex). You can't use Searing Wave again for 1d4 rounds.

BLAZING SOUL

GRAND GIFT

EVOCATION FIRE

Aspect fire

Fire magic suffuses your body and soul, protecting you from lesser flames and allowing you to kindle even the smallest sparks into powerful infernos. You gain fire resistance 10. The first time each hour you are targeted by a fire effect that would deal damage, you regain 1d8 HP for every counteract level of the effect, in addition to taking the damage.

Activate ♫ envision; **Trigger** A creature within 60 feet is critically hit by or critically fails a save against a fire effect and is not reduced to 0 Hit Points; **Effect** Flames roar forth from the triggering creature, dealing 6d6 fire damage to all creatures in a 15-foot burst centered on it, including that creature (basic Reflex). You aren't affected by the activation, though your allies are. If this damage reduces the triggering creature to 0 Hit Points, it is reduced to a fine ash, though its gear remains. You can't use this activation again for 1d4 rounds.

LIFE GIFTS

BESTOW LIFE

MINOR GIFT

POSITIVE TRANSMUTATION

Aspect life

Activate ♦♦ command, envision; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** An infusion of positive energy from your relic can temporarily animate an unliving object. You transform an



adjacent inanimate object into an animated object with a level equal to one-half the relic's level and appropriate to the object (so a broom would become an animated broom). The object pursues a single simple noncombat task you state when you use Bestow Life, ignoring any subsequent commands. The object is mindless and pursues the task single-mindedly and uncreatively. The object remains animated for 1 hour.

HEALING WAVE MINOR GIFT

HEALING NECROMANCY POSITIVE

Aspect life

Activate **envision**; **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** You release a wave of positive energy in a 15-foot cone. You and each living target in the area regain 1d4 HP per level of the relic.

OVERFLOWING LIFE MINOR GIFT

HEALING NECROMANCY POSITIVE

Aspect life

Life force flows through you, and positive energy causes your vital essence to burst through your skin like beads of liquid light. You gain an item bonus equal to half the relic's level (minimum 1) to the Hit Points you recover from positive healing spells; this bonus applies only the first time per casting that a particular spell heals you.

INEXTINGUISHABLE MAJOR GIFT

NECROMANCY POSITIVE

Aspect life

Your connection to life force makes you more difficult to snuff out than others. You die from the dying condition at dying 5, rather than dying 4. If you roll a success on a save against a death or negative effect, you get a critical success instead.

VITALITY SIPHON MAJOR GIFT

HEALING NECROMANCY POSITIVE

Aspect life

Activate **envision**; **Trigger** An ally within 60 feet regains more Hit Points than it is currently down via a targeted positive healing effect without a duration; **Effect** Your relic acts as a relay for vitality. You or an adjacent willing creature regain a number of Hit Points equal to the amount in excess of the triggering creature's maximum Hit Points; for instance, if the triggering creature was missing 5 Hit Points and was targeted by a *heal* spell that restored 12 Hit Points, you or an adjacent willing creature would regain the remaining 7 Hit Points.

LIFE EVERLASTING GRAND GIFT

HEALING NECROMANCY POSITIVE

Aspect life

Activate **envision**; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect**

Massive amounts of positive energy surge forth. For 1 minute, you emit positive energy in a 10-foot emanation centered on you. At the end of your turn, you (if you are living) and allied living creatures in the emanation regain 10 Hit Points. If you or an allied creature would die due to an increased dying value, you can Dismiss the activation as a free action to prevent the death; if you do, their dying value doesn't increase.



MIND GIFTS

LINGUISTIC NEXUS MINOR GIFT

DIVINATION MENTAL

Aspect mind

Your relic grants you a powerful neural plasticity, and as a result, you can learn languages more easily. You learn an additional language of your choice for every 2 levels of the relic (minimum 1). You can retrain one of the languages from the relic with only a single week of downtime.

RECALCULATE MINOR GIFT

DIVINATION MENTAL

Aspect mind

Activate **envision**; **Trigger** You fail an attack roll; **Effect** Analysis of angles, probabilities, and myriad other factors flows from your relic into your mind after you miss an attack, preparing you for the next one. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to your next attack roll against the target you missed, as long as it is made before the beginning of your next turn.

REPOSITORY OF KNOWLEDGE MINOR GIFT

DIVINATION MENTAL

Aspect mind

Your relic is imbued with the psychic impressions of ages past. While the relic is on your person, you are trained in 3 additional Lore skills of the GM's choice that fit the relic's history, decided at the time of gaining this gift. If the relic is 9th level, you instead have expert proficiency in these Lore skills, and if the relic is 17th level, you have master proficiency in these Lore skills.

PERCEPTION FILTER MAJOR GIFT

DIVINATION MENTAL

Aspect mind

Activate **envision**; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Your relic reaches into the minds of nearby creatures and blocks your presence from their perceptions. For the next 10 minutes, a creature that enters a 120-foot-radius emanation, centered on you, must attempt a secret Will save, after which the creature is then temporarily immune for 1 day.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes a -2 status penalty to Perception checks to Seek or otherwise detect you.

Failure You filter all of the creature's senses, making it difficult for it to notice you. When you are hidden or undetected from the creature, it doesn't observe you as soon as you do anything other than Hide, Sneak, or Step. If it rolls a Perception check to Seek or otherwise detect you, it gets the outcome one degree of success worse than what it rolled, and if you roll a Stealth check to Hide, Sneak, or otherwise escape its attention, you get the outcome one degree of success better than what you rolled against the creature. If you use a hostile action toward the creature, the effect ends for that creature after your hostile action is completed.

Critical Failure As failure, but the effect doesn't end for that creature if you use a hostile action against it.

PSYCHIC SCREAM MAJOR GIFT

DIVINATION MENTAL

Aspect mind

Activate **◆◆** envision; **Effect** Your thoughts build before spilling forth in a powerful telepathic scream. Enemies within a 20-foot-radius burst centered on you must attempt a basic Will save or take 1d10 mental damage for every 2 levels of the relic. On a critical failure, they are also stupefied 1 for 1 minute.

MENTAL BASTION

MENTAL

Aspect mind

Your relic takes over some of your mental processes and enhances others. You gain telepathy; if you already have telepathy, you instead increase its range by 30 feet. Whenever you would become stupefied, reduce the value by 1. You are permanently quickened and can use the additional action to Recall Knowledge.

PLANT GIFTS

APOTHECARY'S GARDEN

HEALING NECROMANCY PLANT

Aspect plant

Your relic grows potent natural medicines. Each night, two medicinal herbs (or other plants) grow from your relic and can be harmlessly harvested during your next daily preparations. A living creature that consumes an herb with an Interact action regains 1d8 Hit Points for every 2 relic levels (minimum 1d8). At 9th level, the relic grows three herbs each night, and at 17th level, the relic grows four herbs each night. Herbs wither away 1 day after being harvested.

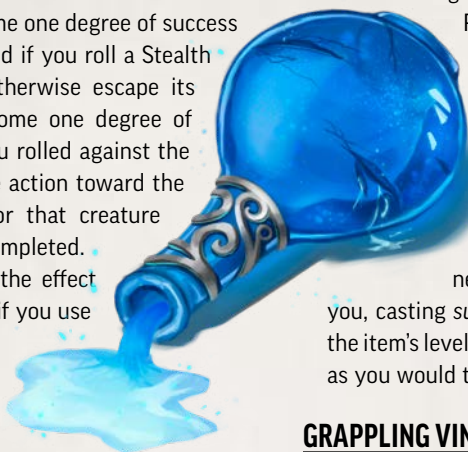
POLLEN SPRAY

MINOR GIFT

EVOCATION PLANT

Aspect plant

Activate **◆◆** command, Interact; **Effect** Pollen and poison spores spray from your relic, dealing 1d6 poison damage for every 2 relic levels (minimum 1d6) to all creatures in a 15-foot cone (basic Fortitude save). On a critical failure, targets are also dazzled for 1 round. You can't use Pollen Spray again for 1d4 rounds.



SPROUT ALLY

MINOR GIFT

PLANT

Aspect plant

Activate **◆◆** command, Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Your relic rapidly matures and animates nearby plant matter into an ally to fight by you, casting *summon plant or fungus*, with a level of half the item's level rounded up. You can Sustain this Activation as you would the spell.

GRAPPLING VINE

MAJOR GIFT

PLANT TRANSMUTATION

Aspect plant

Activate **◆** Interact; **Effect** Your relic launches a sticky, multi-stranded vine at a target within 50 feet. Make an attack roll as you would when using a grappling hook, but if you roll a critical failure on the check to secure the vine, you get a failure instead. Once the vine is anchored, creatures receive a +1 status bonus to Athletics checks to Climb the vine, and they gain a +5-foot status bonus to the distance they move with a successful check while Climbing using the vine.

The vine lasts for 1 day or until you use Grappling Vine again, at which point your older vine withers.



PETAL DANCE

MAJOR GIFT

PLANT TRANSMUTATION

Aspect plant

Activate **◆◆** envision;

Frequency once per hour; **Effect** You disincorporate into a cloud of petals and leaves. This grants you the

swarm trait, immunity to falling damage, resistance 5 to bludgeoning and slashing damage, and weakness 5 to area and splash damage. You can fit into spaces only a few inches wide, moving your constituent petals through the gap. You don't gain the swarm mind ability, so you are still affected normally by mental effects. As a swarm, you can't speak, cast spells, use manipulate actions requiring your hands, activate your magic items, or make any of your Strikes with your normal body. You remain in this form for 1 minute or until you Dismiss the activation. At 13th level, the relic gains a reaction that triggers when you fall or take damage, applying this gift's

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resistances, weaknesses, and immunity to falling damage to the triggering effect.

MEGAFLORA

GRAND GIFT

CONJURATION PLANT

Aspect plant

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact; **Frequency** once per day;

Effect With a pulse of natural energy, your relic grows massive plants in an instant. The megaflora is of one of the following types, chosen by the GM when the relic gains this gift. A megaflora appears in an unoccupied 10-foot space within 30 feet and has 50 Hit Points, weakness to fire 5, 37 AC, +20 Reflex, and +30 Fortitude. It persists for 1 minute or until reduced to 0 Hit Points.

- **Corpseflower** A single putrid-smelling flower grows at the target location. While the flower persists, each round at the end of your turn, all creatures in a 20-foot burst centered on the plant except you must succeed at a Fortitude save or be sickened 2 (also stunned 2 on a critical failure). This is a poison effect.
- **Thorns** A 10-foot-tall thorned plant or bamboo stalk grows at the target location. While the stalk persists, each round at the end of your turn, sharp stakes erupt from the ground, dealing 6d8 piercing damage to all creatures in a 20-foot burst centered on the plant except you (basic Reflex)
- **Tree of Life** A large tree bearing life-giving fruit grows at the target location. While the tree persists, living creatures within reach of the tree can use an Interact action to pick and eat one of the tree's fruits, regaining 2d8+5 Hit Points; picking a fruit without eating it causes the fruit to instantly vanish. This is a healing effect, and a given creature can heal from the tree only once per round.



OBSCURE

MINOR GIFT

ILLUSION SHADOW

Aspect shadow

Your relic absorbs light and wraps shadow around you, hiding you in darkness. As long as you are in dim light in an area of shadows, you can attempt a Stealth check to Hide, even if you aren't concealed against the creature, such as with a creature with darkvision.

SHADOW SMITH

MINOR GIFT

CONJURATION SHADOW

Aspect shadow

Activate ♦ Interact; **Effect** Your relic pulls at nearby shadows, twisting them into the shape of a simple weapon or a simple tool or item, such as a rope or crowbar. It lasts until it is used for a single activity, until you use shadow smith again, or for 1 minute, whichever comes first, after which it dissipates.

DANCING SHADOW

MAJOR GIFT

SHADOW EVOCATION

Aspect shadow; **Prerequisites** The relic is a weapon.

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact; **Frequency** once per hour;

Effect Your relic's shadow detaches from your relic and dances through the air to attack an enemy. When you Activate the relic, designate a target. The relic's shadow flies up to 60 feet until it is adjacent to that foe and then makes a Strike against it, dealing 5d8 damage on a success or double that on a critical success; the damage type is of any type normally dealt by your relic. The shadow uses your attack bonus with the relic, and it uses and contributes to your multiple attack penalty. While this activation is in effect, you can use a single action, which has the attack and concentrate traits, to mentally direct the shadow to make another Strike against the same target. The shadow lasts until that target is reduced to 0 Hit Points, that target moves more than 400 feet from you, or that target moves to an area where no shadow could be cast, such as an area of complete darkness, whichever comes first.

The shadow doesn't take up space, grant flanking, or have any other attributes a creature would, and it automatically follows the chosen foe. The shadow can't make any attack other than its Strike, and feats or spells that affect weapons do not apply to it.

SHADOW GIFTS

ENCOMPASSING DARKNESS

MINOR GIFT

CONJURATION SHADOW

Aspect shadow

The shadows at your feet can hold objects. You can Interact with your shadow to store or remove objects, just like you would a mundane container. Your shadow can contain 3 Bulk of objects, which don't count toward the Bulk you are carrying. At 6th level, and every 4 levels thereafter, you can store 1 additional Bulk of objects in your shadow. While the items are in your shadow and can be detected normally, you

DARK ROADS

MAJOR GIFT

CONJURATION SHADOW TELEPORTATION

Aspect shadow

Activate ♦♦ command, envision; **Effect** Your relic creates a path from your shadow to a nearby one, teleporting you and any items you're wearing or holding from your current space to an unoccupied one within 30 feet that you can see. You can't use the dark roads gift again for 1d4 rounds.

If the destination is not within an area of bright light, the range is instead 60 feet. If this would bring another creature with you—even if you're carrying it in an extradimensional container—the gift fails.

UMBRAL BODY

GRAND GIFT

SHADOW TRANSMUTATION

Aspect shadow

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact; **Effect** Shadowy essence infuses your body, and you can reshape wisps of yourself into a variety of damaging shadows. This has the effect of a 6th-level *shadow blast*, choosing from only bludgeoning, slashing, or piercing damage. You can't use this activation again for 1d4 rounds.

WATER GIFTS

LASHING CURRENTS

MINOR GIFT

EVOCATION WATER

Aspect water; **Prerequisites** The relic is a weapon.

Water collects at the tip of your relic. You can adjust your grip on your relic with an Interact action to allow you to make lashing current weapon Strikes with your relic, which deal 1d4 bludgeoning damage; have the disarm, finesse, reach 10, trip, and versatile S traits; and are in the flail group. Your lashing current Strikes gain the benefit of your relic's fundamental and property runes, though any property runes that would not be applicable to the lashing currents are not applied. You can use another Interact action to return to your normal grip and make Strikes with the relic.

MONSOON CURTAIN

MINOR GIFT

AIR CONJURATION WATER

Aspect water

Activate ♦♦♦ command, envision;

Frequency once per day; **Effect** You call down a curtain of violent rain in a location within 120 feet. The wall is 5 feet thick, 30 feet long, up to 30 feet high, and lasts for 1 minute. The wall stands vertically, but you can shape its path. The wall has the following effects.

- If a fire effect crosses through the wall, it either uses the outcome one degree of success worse than the result of its attack roll or its targets use the outcome one degree of success better than the result of their saving throw, as appropriate.
- Creatures with a weakness to water that cross the wall or start their turn in the wall take damage equal to their weakness.



- The wall imposes a -2 status penalty to Perception checks to sense creatures or objects on the other side.

TIDAL CRASH

MINOR GIFT

EVOCATION WATER

Aspect water

Activate ♦♦ command, envision; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Your relic spews forth a dense sphere of water. Make a spell attack roll against a target within 30 feet. On a success, you deal 2d10 bludgeoning damage plus 2 bludgeoning splash damage. At 3rd level and every 2 levels thereafter, increase the initial damage by 1d10 and the splash damage by 1.

BOTTOMLESS RESERVOIR

MAJOR GIFT

CONJURATION EXTRADIMENSIONAL WATER

Aspect water

Activate ♦ Interact; **Effect** Your relic can absorb and release water, storing it in a endless reservoir. You either touch your relic to an adjacent body of water and absorb 1 gallon of it into the reservoir, or you release 1 gallon of a liquid from the reservoir. You can add another action to the activation to absorb water from a touched creature made entirely of water, like a water elemental. If you do, it takes 1d6 damage per relic level (basic Fortitude save).

Activate ⤵ Interact; **Trigger** You are targeted by an acid or water effect; **Effect** Your relic attempts to counteract the effect, expending 1 gallon of stored liquid. At the GM's discretion, you can use this ability on effects made of other liquids, such as blood.

FLOWING FOOTSTEPS

MAJOR GIFT

TRANSMUTATION WATER

Aspect water

Your relic ensures no water impedes your movement. You gain the effects of the *water walk* spell, and the ability to breathe water. You also gain a swim Speed equal to your Speed or 15 feet, whichever is higher.

RIPPLES AND WAVES

GRAND GIFT

WATER

Aspect water

You become attuned to the ebb and flow of all things. You gain wavesense 60 as a precise sense and can cast 5th-level *hydraulic push* at will as an innate spell.

Activate ♦♦ command, envision; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Ankle-deep water floods outward from you, filling a 60-foot emanation centered on you for 1 minute. Enemies within the area without a swim Speed treat the area as difficult terrain for movement on land. While the effect persists, you can have any water effects you generate originate from any point within the emanation, in addition to their normal range and area.

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ARTIFACTS

A globe of utter darkness that consumes all things. Powerful weapons created in antiquity carrying the hopes of an entire people. A simple deck of cards representing fortunes both transcendent and deadly. These are artifacts—items of incredible power, spoken of in thousands of stories and beyond the capability of modern people to create.

Stranger and more powerful than other magic items, artifacts can change the course of history in the right hands—or the wrong hands. Simply finding an artifact is a pivotal moment in your campaign, and its presence then ripples throughout your entire game, warping the story around it. Some entire adventures revolve around one artifact!

Adding an artifact to your game should never be taken lightly. Artifacts shouldn't be found in normal treasure hoards, even at 20th level, and you'll need to structure moments in your plot that play into the artifact's presence. Prepare yourself for encounters being easily overcome by the artifact. That doesn't mean you shouldn't include such encounters, since part of the thrill of an artifact is that it breaks the normal rules! Though you should include an artifact mindfully, you should allow it to have its full impact so that it can do itself and the story of your game justice.

ARTIFACT RULES

Every artifact is an item with the artifact trait. This trait means two things: the item can't be crafted by normal means, and it can't be damaged by normal means. Artifacts are always rare or unique. The ones found here are all 20th level or higher, which is typical for artifacts. The other rules for wearing or using the item still apply.

ARTIFACT DESTRUCTION

An artifact's stat block usually has a destruction entry. This details the extraordinary method needed to destroy the item. These entries can be highly specific. It could take completing an entire quest, or even an entire campaign, to finally destroy an artifact. However, the story of your game might require something different, so you can always change an artifact's destruction requirement for your game.

CREATING AN ARTIFACT

Mechanically, an artifact functions in the game just like any other item—only the scope of its abilities is different. Artifacts can and should do things normal items can't, so you don't need to apply the normal limitations on creating items.

When you're making an artifact, start by defining its role in the story. Is it meant to be a powerful weapon against the forces of darkness? A mercurial force injecting random chance? A terrible danger that needs to be destroyed? The artifact's role in the story affects the

features you give it. Come up with some story beats that make sense for the item, then create abilities that enable those moments. An artifact can have more abilities than a typical item—just make sure they all fit its theme.

Give your item the artifact trait and either the rare trait (if there multiple items of its kind), or the unique trait (if only one exists). Other traits work like they do for any other item. An artifact is usually 20th level or higher, but its specific level is up to you. Imagine who created it and what their level likely was.

Though you can disregard most of the normal limitations on items, be careful not to create an artifact that will undermine your story. If your item's abilities are so useful or strong that the best option in any battle is to always use the artifact to annihilate the opposition, the artifact has taken over your story instead of serving it. A 5th-level character with access to 10th-level spells through an artifact can lead to incredible stories, but if the DC is so high that enemies are guaranteed to critically fail against those spells except on a natural 20, the item will probably distort play more than you intended. To avoid this, you might set the item's DCs, attack bonuses, and the spell levels of its offensive abilities significantly lower than they would be for an item of its level, especially if they can be used at will. You could also create artifacts that use the wielder's spell DC instead of having their own DC, to make them more broadly usable at a wider range of levels. In addition, an artifact's abilities should be somewhat narrow in their application; aim to make your artifacts very powerful in certain situations, rather than having broadly applicable abilities. For instance, the *orbs of dragonkind* each work against only a certain kind of dragon, which makes them hugely powerful when facing that one creature, but not against every foe the PCs run across.

ARTIFACTS




Countless artifacts have been created over the ages, only a few of which are described here.

AXE OF THE DWARVEN LORDS

ITEM 26**UNIQUE** **ARTIFACT** **CONJURATION** **MAGICAL** **TRANSMUTATION****Usage** held in 2 hands; **Bulk** 3

The blade of this +4 *major striking keen returning speed dwarven waraxe* is carved with an intricate design depicting countless generations of great dwarven warriors and leaders. The axe has the thrown 30 feet weapon trait, in addition to the normal weapon traits for a dwarven waraxe. Strikes with the axe deal an additional 1d6 damage to orcs. While the axe

is in your possession, you gain a +4 item bonus when Crafting armor, jewelry, metalworking, stonemasonry, snares, traps, and weapons. If you are a dwarf, you gain greater darkvision (*Core Rulebook* 465) while holding the axe. If you are not a dwarf, you are stupefied 4 while holding the axe, and if you are an orc, you are also drained 4 and enfeebled 4 while holding it.

Activate    envision, Interact; **Frequency** once per week; **Effect** The axe casts a 10th-level *summon elemental* spell to conjure an elite elemental avalanche (*Bestiary* 6, 147). The spell is automatically sustained, requiring no action on your part but still allowing you to command the elemental on each of your turns. You can Dismiss the Spell.

Destruction If an orc beheads a dwarven king with the *Axe of the Dwarven Lords*, the axe rusts away to nothing.


DECK OF MANY THINGS

ITEM 22

RARE ARTIFACT MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** –

These 22 cards of heavy vellum, usually stored in a box or a pouch, bear images or glyphs depicting symbols of magical power. Looking at a card without activating it shows the card face but has no magical effect. Once the deck is face down, the cards randomize themselves—if you look at the top card multiple times, you may find it changes. Any card removed from the deck goes missing after a few seconds, reappearing in the deck. Advice on randomly selecting cards appears on page 108.

Activate  envision, Interact; **Effect** You declare how many cards you will draw facedown from the deck, then draw your first card. The card takes effect immediately. Any further cards must be drawn within the next hour, and any card you don't voluntarily draw flits off the deck and affects you anyway. You can never activate the same *deck of many things* again.

Once a card is drawn, it produces its effect immediately and then disappears back into the deck, which immediately shuffles itself. (The *Dullard* and *Jester* are exceptions, as described in their entries below.)

The effects of each card are as follows.

- **Balance** Your alignment changes to a radically different one. If you fail to adhere to that alignment, you lose a level and all the benefits you gained at that level. Your XP total doesn't change when you lose a level this way.
- **Comet** If you alone defeat the next low-threat or harder hostile enemy or enemies you encounter, you gain enough XP to reach the next level. Otherwise, you gain no benefit.
- **Donjon** You're imprisoned by a 10th-level *imprisonment* ritual. This uses the prison option, typically sequestering

you in a distant part of the world. You also lose all your items. Cease drawing cards.

- **Dullard** Immediately reduce your Intelligence score by 1d4+1. You can then draw an additional card, and the *Dullard* card then disappears forever.
- **Euryale** (curse) A medusa's image curses you with a permanent –1 status penalty to all saving throws. This can be removed by only a deity or the *Fates* card.
- **The Fates** The *Fates* respin the fabric of reality to save you from any situation you choose. This can reverse even a past event, and you can make the decision instantly even if the event would slay you. This intervention saves only you, not anyone else affected by the event. There's no limit on how long you can wait before using this effect.
- **Flames** A fiend becomes filled with anger, jealousy, envy, or some other reason to despise you. Its hatred for you doesn't cease until either it or you is dead. It attacks you or otherwise attempts to foil you within 1d20 days. The GM determines the specifics of the fiend.
- **Fool** You lose 1d10×100 XP unless you choose to draw two more cards.
- **Gem** Gain your choice of 25 pieces of jewelry worth 200 gp each or 50 gems worth 100 gp each.
- **Jester** You can either draw two more cards or gain 1d10×100 XP. The card then disappears forever.
- **Key** Gain a magic weapon of 12th level or higher. The GM determines the item and what runes it has, if any.
- **Knight** A palace guard (page 206) arrives and swears unflinching loyalty to you.
- **Moon** Roll 1d4 to determine how many wishes the card grants you, which also affects the phase of the moon depicted on the card (1: crescent moon; 2: half moon; 3: gibbous moon; 4: full moon). These wishes each take one action to speak and have the effect of a *wish* spell.
- **Rogue** One NPC ally becomes filled with hatred and immediately turns against you forever. The NPC might keep this hatred secret until an opportune moment.
- **Ruin** You lose all your non-magical possessions, including any wealth and property.
- **Skull** You must immediately battle a lesser death (*Bestiary* 197). If slain in the battle, you can never be revived, except by a deity.
- **Star** Gain an ability boost you must use immediately on one ability score of your choice.
- **Sun** Gain 1,000 XP and a beneficial permanent magic item of 6th to 11th level, chosen by the GM.
- **Talons** All your magic items disappear permanently, except for the deck and any artifact of higher level than the deck.
- **Throne** You gain a permanent +4 status bonus to



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CARD SUBSTITUTIONS

You can use playing cards or tarot cards as proxies for the cards in a deck of many things.

Card	Playing Card	Tarot Card
Balance	2 of spades	XI. Justice
Comet	2 of diamonds	2 of swords
Donjon	Ace of spades	4 of swords
Dullard	2 of clubs	2 of pentacles
Euryale	Queen of spades	10 of swords
The Fates	Ace of hearts	3 of cups
Flames	Queen of clubs	XV. The Devil
Fool	Joker (black)	0. The Fool
Gem	2 of hearts	7 of cups
Jester	Joker (red)	XII. The Hanged Man
Key	Queen of hearts	V. The Hierophant
Knight	Jack of hearts	Page of swords
Moon	Queen of diamonds	XVIII. The Moon
Rogue	Jack of spades	5 of swords
Ruin	King of spades	XVI. The Tower
Skull	Jack of clubs	XIII. Death
Star	Jack of diamonds	XVII. The Star
Sun	King of diamonds	XIX. The Sun
Talons	Ace of clubs	Queen of pentacles
Throne	King of hearts	4 of wands
Vizier	Ace of diamonds	IX. The Hermit
The Void	King of clubs	8 of swords

Diplomacy checks, and you now own a small castle in any open area you wish. You must choose its location within 1 hour.

- **Vizier** Upon request, you can learn the solution to any one problem or the correct answer to any one question, unless that information is obscured by a deity. This doesn't necessarily give you the means to act on that solution. You have 1 year to take the vizier's advice or lose its benefits.
- **The Void** Your mind becomes trapped forever. This card is fickle, but it often throws the psyche into a prison in an object on a distant plane or planet. *Wish* or similarly powerful magic can reveal your psyche's location, but it doesn't bring you back. Your comatose body continues to function. Cease drawing cards.

Destruction Trick the Grim Reaper into drawing the Skull card.

ELDER SIGN

ITEM 25

RARE ABJURATION ARTIFACT OCCULT

Usage held in one hand; **Bulk** 1

This stone tablet is carved with the symbol of a five-branched twig. There are only a limited number of *elder signs*, and each time one is destroyed, the universe's doom creeps inexorably closer. Reciting one of three different occult mantras (DC 20 Occultism check to do so correctly) allows three different activations. All three abilities work only on a creature connected to the Elder Mythos or a cosmic horror, such as a wendigo or gug; the activations refer to them as "eldritch creatures."

Activate ♦♦ command, envision, Interact; **Effect** The *elder*

sign casts a 10th-level *banishment* spell on an eldritch creature. Even if the creature isn't extraplanar, the *elder sign* can still banish it, sending it back to the part of the Material Plane from which it originated. If the creature is a Great Old One, the *elder sign* banishes it automatically (as if it critically failed its save) but is then forever destroyed.

Activate ♦♦ command, envision, Interact; **Effect** The *elder sign* casts *dispel magic* on an effect from an eldritch creature, using a counteract level of 10 and +30 modifier for the roll.

Activate ♦♦ command, envision, Interact; **Effect** The *elder sign* casts *dimensional lock*, though it wards against travel by only eldritch creatures. Each time the *elder sign* casts *dimensional lock* in this way, the previous *dimensional lock* spell ends.

Destruction The only way to destroy an *elder sign* is to use it to banish a Great Old One.

ESSENCE PRISM

ITEM 28

UNIQUE ARTIFACT TRANSMUTATION

Bulk 5

This enormous, multifaceted prism normally rests on a pedestal, eerily refracting many-colored lights even when no light source is present. In reality, the prism refracts the four magical essences into the visible spectrum (see page 300 in the *Core Rulebook* for more on the four essences). A creature adjacent to the prism can adjust its facets with an Interact action to change between two polarities. Two essences flow from two input streams into the prism, where the prism combines them into a single output stream; alternatively, a single essence flows from one input stream into the prism and is split into two output streams. A creature that enters and stays within an input essence stream for 1 minute is slowly encased in solid magic, at which point it is paralyzed until anyone reverses the prism's flow or finishes activating the prism. A creature stepping into an output essence stream is gently pushed back and out of the stream.

Activate ♦♦ Interact; **Requirements** The prism has only one input stream; **Effect** You alter and rearrange the facets of the *essence prism*, adjusting the essences to select for a single quality, which might be associated with mental essence, like a personality trait; material essence, like a physical quality; vital essence, like a belief or instinct; or spiritual essence, like an alignment component such as good or lawful. You must succeed at a secret DC 30 skill check with a skill associated with a magical tradition that uses the essence you chose (for instance, Arcana or Occultism for mental essence, as arcane and occult magic both use mental essence). On a failure, you accidentally set the prism for some other quality.

Activate 1 minute (Interact); **Requirements** The prism has only one input stream, and a creature is encased in magic in the input stream; **Effect** Over the course of the next hour, the creature in the input stream has its essences refracted through the prism, creating two cocoons of magic in the output streams that each contain a new creature. At the end of the process, the original creature is gone, and the two new creatures break free of their cocoons. Each creature is part of the original, separated from the rest based on the

last quality set by the prism's first activation. For instance, if you set the prism to "good," one creature would have all the original creature's good aspects and the other would be the original creature's evil side. Unless you selected a physical quality, both new creatures look just like the original. The new creatures are usually 2 levels lower than the original, but if the original creature was strongly biased with respect to the quality you chose (for instance, if splitting out the good and evil side of a redeemer), the stronger creature is 1 level lower and the weaker creature is 3 or more levels lower. If calibrated correctly, this activation can also reverse the effect of the third activation.

Activate 1 minute (Interact); **Requirements** The prism has two input streams, and a creature is encased in magic in each of the input streams; **Effect** Over the course of the next hour, the essences of both creatures in the input streams are refracted through the prism, creating a cocoon of magic in the output stream that contains a new creature. At the end of the process, the original creatures are gone, and the new creature breaks free of its cocoon. The new creature is an amalgam of the originals, with a new personality blended from both, and is usually 1 or 2 levels higher than the higher level of the original creatures unless the lower-level creature was much weaker. This activation also reverses the effect of the second activation.

Destruction Forcing the *essence prism* to combine two incompatible demigods destroys the prism, though it might also result in a new divinity.

FORGEFATHER'S SEAL


ITEM 24

RARE ABJURATION ARTIFACT DIVINE




Usage etched onto armor


This rune was created by Torag, god of the forge, protection, and strategy, and shared with his greatest artisans and warriors. Torag designed a small number of these seals as gifts to allied good deities; each one is nearly identical but has a different spell effect when using the reaction activation; for instance, Sarenrae's seal casts *sunburst* instead of *earthquake*.

A seal constantly rings with the quiet sound of a hammer striking an anvil when etched onto a *runestone*. A *Forgefather's seal* can be etched only onto armor that can bear two or more property runes, and it is so powerful that it takes the place of two property runes. While wearing armor etched with a *Forgefather's seal*, you gain fire resistance 40. You ignore the armor's check penalty and Speed penalty (if any); if the armor is light or medium, increase its item bonus to AC by 1. In addition, any shield you wield automatically recovers 10 Hit Points at the start of your turn each round.

Activate  Interact; **Frequency** once per hour; **Trigger** You

are hit by an attack; **Effect** The *Forgefather's seal* glows and your armor shakes as it absorbs the blow. The attack's damage is reduced by 100 and you cast *earthquake* (DC 40), centered directly on the triggering creature. You decide the area of the *earthquake* when you Cast the Spell, from as small as the size of the creature and up to a 60-foot burst.

Activate    Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You call upon on the restorative powers of the seal to repair an item within reach. The rune instantly restores the item to full Hit Points, even if the item was destroyed, using the effects of the *remake* spell, so long as the majority of the item is available for the repair. The seal can restore even magic items and artifacts of its level or lower. Once you have used this ability, the seal's ability to automatically repair shields becomes inactive until the next time you make your daily preparations.

Activate  envision; **Trigger** You have not acted yet on your turn; **Effect** You call upon Torag to defend your allies and those around you, sacrificing yourself in the process. Creatures of your choosing within 60 feet recover all their Hit Points. If any of the creatures are dead, they are instead brought back to life with half of their maximum Hit Points. The chosen creatures also gain a +4 status bonus to AC and saving throws, and fast healing 15 for 1 hour. You can use this ability to bring back to life a creature that requires a *miracle* spell or divine intervention to raise from the dead, as long as you choose no other creatures within 60 feet to recover. Once you use this activation, you are turned into a perfect statue made from stone or metal that depicts you in a glorious pose honoring your sacrifice, and you can never be restored. The *Forgefather's seal* remains on this statue and can be transferred to another suit of armor or a *runestone* as normal.

Destruction Using the *Forgefather's seal* ability to bring the dead back to life on an evil demigod causes it to shatter in a violent explosion that destroys the seal and the statue made as part of the sacrifice, erasing all knowledge of the user from existence. It does, however, bring the evil demigod back to life.

HORNS OF NARAGA

ITEM 26

UNIQUE ARTIFACT INVESTED MAGICAL NECROMANCY

Usage worn headwear; **Bulk** 2

This imposing helm bears the horns of a powerful black dragon. While wearing the *Horns of Naraga*, you gain greater darkvision and immunity to acid. If you are undead, you gain resistance 40 to positive damage. If you are not undead, the helm quickly saps the life from you, dealing 10d6 negative

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damage to you every round. If you die from this damage, you rise as an undead of an equal level in 1d4 rounds.

Activate ◆ envision; **Trigger** You touch a creature as part of an unarmed attack or melee spell attack roll; **Effect** The creature takes 5d6 negative damage. If you are an undead, you regain Hit Points equal to the negative damage the creature took.

Activate ◆◆◆ command; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The *Horns of Naraga* transform into Naraga, an ancient black dragon (*Bestiary* 106). Naraga appears in an adjacent appropriate space, and if no such space is available, she does not appear. Naraga follows your commands without question. She remains for up to 1 hour or until you use an Interact action to dismiss her, after which she reverts back to the helm. If Naraga is slain, she immediately reverts back to the helm and can't be summoned for 1 week. You don't receive any of the helm's other benefits while it is transformed.

Destruction The helm is utterly obliterated if crushed between the jaws of an ancient black dragon's skull located in a desert while the sun is at its zenith.

MIRROR OF SORSHEN ITEM 25

UNIQUE ARTIFACT ENCHANTMENT MAGICAL

Usage bonded (see below); Bulk L

The silvery glass of this oval mirror displays alluring sights. Its dark wooden frame is studded with small green gems and is carved with the shapes of a male figure on one edge of the glass and a female figure on the other side.

The mirror can form a bond with a spellcaster who has legendary proficiency in Arcana or Occultism, who becomes the mirror's owner. Regardless of where the mirror is, as long as the bond remains, the owner is aware of everything the mirror is currently reflecting and can use the mirror's activations.

Whenever an intelligent creature looks in the mirror, they see an image of a person, creature, or item they find irresistible—most often one they find attractive. The specific image varies depending on the observer, even when more than one creature is looking into the mirror at the same time. Observers are fascinated by the images in the mirror unless they succeed at a DC 35 Will save each round. On a failure, they stare blankly at the mirror for as long as it remains in view, and if it leaves their view, they stare toward the last place they saw the mirror for several minutes thereafter. This is an emotion, enchantment, incapacitation, and visual effect. Creatures that are fascinated by the mirror are so deeply entranced that they don't end their fascinated condition automatically even if a creature uses hostile actions against them or their allies; instead, they can attempt a DC 30 Will save to end the fascination. At the GM's discretion, a truly innocent creature or a creature that has renounced all worldly pleasures might be immune to the mirror's fascination.

Activate ◆◆ envision (emotion, enchantment, incapacitation, visual); **Effect** You force a creature looking at the mirror to attempt an additional Will save against the mirror's fascination effect, even if they succeeded at their save.

Activate ◆◆◆ command (emotion, enchantment, incapacitation); **Requirements** The target must be fascinated by the mirror; **Effect** You control the target for 30 days, with the effect of a critically failed saving throw against *dominate*. If the victim sees the mirror again at any point before this duration expires, the control extends for an additional 30 days from the moment it looked at the mirror again. While there is no initial saving throw, the DC to break free due to commands against the creature's nature is 35.

Destruction The *Mirror of Sorshen* shatters into a thousand pieces if an intelligent but completely innocent creature resists the mirror's attraction and then accidentally drops it.

ORB OF DRAGONKIND ITEM 25

UNIQUE ARCANE ARTIFACT ENCHANTMENT

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk 1

Each of the legendary *orbs of dragonkind* contains the essence and personality of a powerful dragon, with each of the 10 most famous orbs preserving a different type of metallic or chromatic dragon's spirit. It is believed that orbs for other types of true dragons exist, though that theory is yet to be confirmed.

While holding an *orb of dragonkind*, you are immune to the breath weapon of the dragon variety associated with the orb. An *orb of dragonkind* also grants a number of additional senses. You can communicate verbally and visually with the bearers of other orbs as if you were in the same room with them. You know if there are any dragons within 10 miles of you at all times; this extends to 100 miles for dragons of the type associated with the orb. If an associated dragon is within 1 mile, you know which direction the dragon is from you and the dragon's age, such as young, adult, or ancient. Each orb grants a 10th-level arcane innate spell that you can cast at will, determined by the specific orb.

The *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* can convey the innate spells of any of the other orbs, as well as their activated abilities, but it can grant each individual power only once per day. In addition, the bearer of the gold orb can use its 3-action activation to attempt to cast *dominate* on the bearer of another orb if they are within 1 mile, as if that bearer were a dragon of the associated type within 500 feet. The last reports of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* on Golarion indicate the orb has been destroyed, however. GMs running campaigns in settings other than the Age of Lost Omens might decide the gold orb is still intact for their campaigns.

Bearing an *orb of dragonkind* earns you the enmity of all dragonkind forever because you profited from the



enslavement of the dragon within the orb, even if you later lose the orb.

Spell Granted (DC 40) black dragon (*darkness*), blue dragon (*hallucinatory terrain*), brass dragon (*speak with animals*), bronze dragon (*control water*), copper dragon (*hideous laughter*), green dragon (*entangle*), red dragon (*wall of fire*), silver dragon (*detect alignment* [evil only]), white dragon (*wall of ice*)

Activate **◆◆◆** command; **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** You cast a 10th-level *dominate* spell (DC 40) on a dragon of the type associated with the orb within 500 feet, except the effect lasts for 1 month rather than unlimited. The dragon does not receive its status bonus to saving throws against magic. The dragon is then temporarily immune to further domination via the orb for 24 hours.

Activate **◆◆** envision, Interact; **Frequency** three times per day; **Effect**

You breathe an elemental blast that deals 25d6 damage (DC 40 basic Reflex save) in either a 60-foot cone or a 100-foot line (your choice). The breath's damage type matches the Breath Weapon of the dragon type associated with the orb of dragonkind (acid for the black orb, electricity for the blue orb, and so on).

Destruction An orb of dragonkind violently shatters and explodes when exposed to the Breath Weapon of a dragon who is a descendant of the dragon trapped within. The explosion deals damage as the 2-action activation above to all creatures within 90 feet.

PHILOSOPHER'S EXTRACTOR

ITEM 28

RARE ARTIFACT EVOCATION MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Bulk 8

This bizarre machine is a complex arrangement of flasks, tubes, and other alchemical equipment. The *philosopher's extractor* is designed to create the ultimate alchemical concoctions. The extractor functions as an exceptional set of alchemist's tools, granting a +4 item bonus to Crafting checks related to alchemy. When using the extractor to Craft an alchemical item or with infused reagents as part of your daily preparations, you can create impeccable alchemical items. An impeccable alchemical item always uses the maximum numerical value possible for any rolls it requires, such as dealing maximum damage with alchemist's fire or restoring the maximum number of Hit Points with an elixir of life. If the impeccable item has a duration, it lasts twice as long as normal. Finally, an impeccable alchemical item never has a drawback.

Activate **◆◆◆** Interact; **Frequency** once per minute; **Effect** You use the extractor to produce an alchemical item of your level or lower whose formula you know. The extractor

can create 56 levels' worth of items per day in this way. For example, the extractor could create two true elixirs of life (19th level) and two moderate elixirs of life (9th level), or eight comprehension elixirs (7th level), and so on.

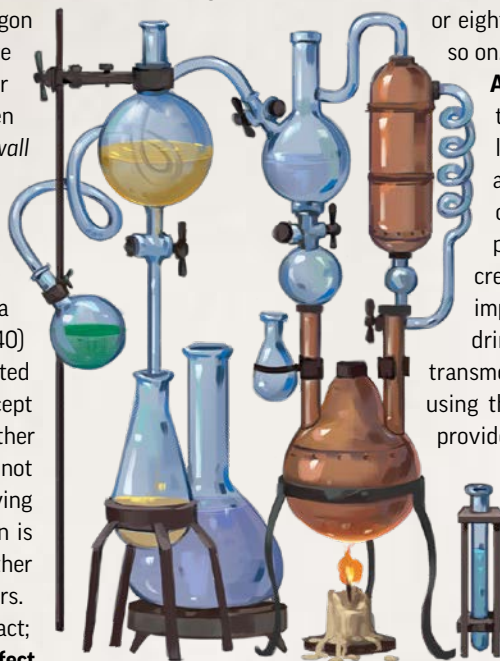
Activate 1 hour (Interact); **Effect** You take a sizable portion of a creature (at least two-thirds of its original mass) and filter it through the mechanisms of the extractor. After the end of the process, the *philosopher's extractor* creates a transmogrifying mutagen that imparts the essence of the creature to the drinker. The extractor can make several transmogrifying mutagens simultaneously using the same activation if enough mass is provided at once, up to a maximum of 10 concurrent mutagens. Drinking a transmogrifying mutagen imparts you with one of the creature's unique abilities for 1 hour. This could grant one of several abilities such as a dragon's Breath Weapon, darkvision, flight, frightful presence,

or immunity to sleep. The ability functions as it did for the original creature, except it uses your class DC or your spell DC (whichever is higher) instead of the creature's DC. The mutagen grants only abilities based on a creature's physiology and never grants magic-related abilities such as innate spells or spellcasting ability. The GM ultimately decides what ability a transmogrifying mutagen grants.

Unlike normal for mutagens and polymorph effects, you can drink multiple transmogrifying mutagens and gain benefits from each. When you drink transmogrifying mutagens made from different creatures, you receive abilities from each creature. When you drink multiple transmogrifying mutagens made from the same type of creature, such as multiple mutagens made from trolls, you gain an additional ability for each transmogrifying mutagen you drink, and the duration of the abilities from that creature type increases by 1 hour for each additional concoction you drink.

However, these additional benefits come with a risk; if you drink a transmogrifying mutagen while at least one other is active, after drinking it, you must succeed at a flat check with a DC equal to the total number of active transmogrifying mutagens you've consumed. On a failure, you fully transform into a member of the species of the latest transmogrifying mutagen you drank, and you almost always go berserk from your change. The transformation may leave some amount of your personality and memories intact, at the GM's discretion.

Destruction Simultaneously feeding the *philosopher's extractor* sizable portions of an aeon, angel, archon, azata, daemon, demon, devil, protean, and psychopomp, each of at least 14th level, along with a *philosopher's stone* causes the



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device to jam, overheat, and explode. Creatures within 60 feet of the explosion must succeed at a DC 55 Reflex save or become covered in an alchemical slurry that transforms them into a horrifying amalgam of at least two of the creatures used to destroy the machine.

SERITHTIAL

ITEM 23

UNIQUE LG ABJURATION ARTIFACT DIVINE INTELLIGENT

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk 1

Perception +28; normal vision and hearing within 60 feet

Communication empathy (partner only)

Skills Iomedae Lore +29, Religion +26, Zon-Kuthon Lore +29

Int +2, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +2

Will +30

The legendary blade *Serithtial* is said to have been forged by Iomedae, goddess of honor, justice, and valor. She is an intelligent +4 *major striking holy bastard sword*. Although the sword is made of steel, *Serithtial* is also treated as cold iron and silver (*Core Rulebook* 578), allowing her to deal more damage to certain supernatural creatures. She glows as bright as a torch, but you or *Serithtial* can suppress or resume this glow as a single action, which has the concentrate trait. In addition, Strikes with *Serithtial* deal an additional 2d6 damage against creatures that are worshippers of Zon-Kuthon, and while wielding *Serithtial*, you constantly benefit from *death ward* and *freedom of movement* spells that function only against effects created by followers of Zon-Kuthon.

Serithtial was forged as a bastard sword, and she reverts to this shape when no one wields her, but she can also detect what sort of blade her current wielder prefers and transform into it (choosing from dagger, shortsword, longsword, scimitar, falchion, greatsword, rapier, or bastard sword) using an action, which she does when first held. The wielder can empathically tell *Serithtial* to transform at any time by using a single action, which has the concentrate trait, after which *Serithtial* uses an action to transform.

Serithtial is willing to work with a partner of almost any alignment as long as they are dedicated to defeating the great wyrm Kazavon and the forces of Zon-Kuthon. If you ignore those threats and pursue your own agenda instead, before long *Serithtial* attempts to seize control of your body (DC 45 Will save to resist her control), though she typically remains in control for only long enough to find a more worthy partner. You can attempt a new Will save each day to retake control of your body.

Activate envision; **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** *Serithtial* spends the appropriate number of actions and casts a 9th level *heal* or *zone of truth* spell (DC 45 for either of the two spells).

Destruction If Kazavon or a great wyrm shadow dragon who is a worshipper of Zon-Kuthon uses its breath weapon on *Serithtial* while she is unattended, the sword melts into a pool of mundane iron.

SHOT OF THE FIRST VAULT

ITEM 23

RARE ARTIFACT DIVINE EVOCATION

Ammunition any

Legends claim that some long-forgotten god stole the original bundle of *shots of the First Vault* from Abadar's repository. Since then, individual pieces have turned up throughout the multiverse. When you pick up a *shot of the First Vault*, it immediately reshapes itself to function with any ranged weapon and establishes you as its owner until another creature picks it up. As its owner, you can use the shot's single-action activation after shooting it.

Instead of rolling weapon damage dice, a *shot of the First Vault* deals 25 damage plus any bonuses or additional damage as if 25 were the result of the weapon's damage dice; the damage type matches that normally dealt by the weapon. Upon damaging a creature, the *shot of the First Vault* shatters, and the fragments ricochet to hit any other enemies within 30 feet, making attack rolls with the same attack bonus. The shattered fragments remain lodged in the creatures they damage; the creatures are clumsy 2 while the fragments remain in place. A total of 3 actions, which have the manipulate trait, are required to remove the fragments from yourself or an adjacent creature; alternatively, a single action and a successful DC 30 Medicine check can be used. A critical failure on this Medicine check deals 10 persistent bleed damage to the creature with the embedded fragment.

Activate ♦ command; **Effect** You recall the *shot of the First Vault*, which automatically reloads itself into your weapon. If the shot had fragmented, the fragments violently dislodge themselves, dealing 15 persistent bleed damage to each creature in which they were embedded. The fragments then unite to re-form the *shot of the First Vault*, which automatically reloads itself into your weapon.

Activate ♦♦♦ Interact; **Requirements** The shot is loaded in your ranged weapon, or at hand if your ranged weapon has a reload of 0; **Effect** You line up a perfectly aimed attack directly toward the First Vault. You Strike a creature, then the *shot of the First Vault* attempts to bring your target with it as it returns to the First Vault. Unless your attack roll is a critical failure, the creature must attempt a DC 45 Reflex save; this effect has the incapacitation trait. Regardless, the *shot of the First Vault* returns to the First Vault.

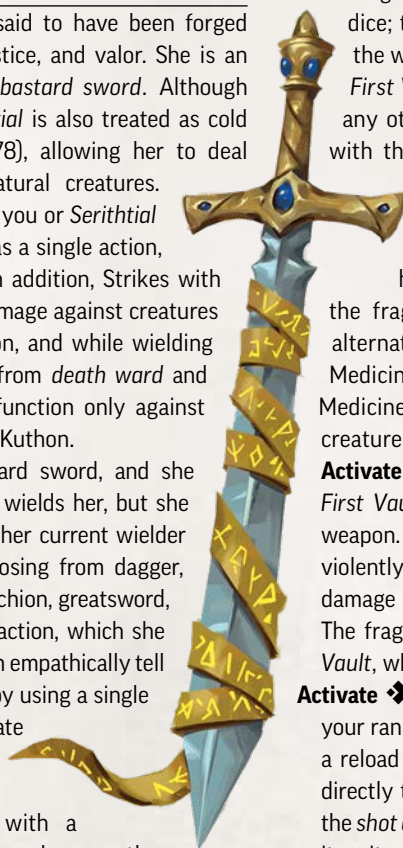
Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is moved 1d20×50 feet in the direction you fired. If this causes it to hit a solid object, it takes 50 bludgeoning damage.

Failure The creature is transported to a random location on the plane of Axis.

Critical Failure The creature is transported to the First Vault. Unless it is capable of eluding Abadar's precautions, it is likely unable to escape the Vault on its own.

Destruction If 10 *shots of the First Vault* are all fired at the same group of keketar or izfiitar proteans within 1 minute of each other, each shot was a hit, and the shots are then





recalled, the shots collide as they attempt to re-form and crumble to dust.

SPHERE OF ANNIHILATION

ITEM 27

RARE ARTIFACT MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Bulk –

A *sphere of annihilation* is a floating black sphere that pulls any matter that comes into contact with it into a void, destroying it utterly. Anything or anyone destroyed by the sphere can be brought back only by a deity's direct intervention. The sphere can't be counteracted by *dispel magic* or similar effects.

The sphere stays entirely still until caused to move by a creature controlling it. Taking control of the sphere requires succeeding at an attempt to activate it. A *talisman of the sphere* (see below) makes it easier to control the sphere.

Activate ♦ command; **Requirements** You are within 40 feet of the sphere; **Effect** You attempt a DC 30 Arcana or Occultism check to take control of the sphere. If someone else already controls the sphere, this check uses their Will DC if higher. If you succeed, you take control of the sphere. If you fail, the sphere moves 10 feet closer to you (or 20 feet on a critical failure). You keep control as long as you remain within 80 feet of the sphere and Sustain the Activation each round.

When you Sustain the Activation, you must attempt a DC 30 Arcana or Occultism check. If you succeed, you direct the sphere to move up to 10 feet in a straight line (or up to 20

feet on a critical success). On a failure, you lose control of the sphere, and it moves 10 feet closer to you in a straight line (or 20 feet on a critical failure).

Destruction When a *gate* spell is cast such that its rift overlaps a *sphere of annihilation*, roll d%. On a result of 1–50, the sphere is destroyed; on a 51–85, the spell is disrupted; and on a 86–100, everything within an 180-foot emanation of the sphere is pulled to another plane through a tear in the spatial fabric.

If a *rod of cancellation* (*Pathfinder Advanced Player's Guide*) touches the sphere, both items explode, dealing 14d6 bludgeoning damage (DC 35 basic Reflex save) to everything in a 60-foot burst from the point of their destruction.

TALISMAN OF THE SPHERE

ITEM 20

RARE ARTIFACT EVOCATION MAGICAL

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** –

This loop of adamantine can be slung on a chain to be worn as a necklace, but must be held to convey its benefits. A creature that can't cast either arcane or occult spells takes 8d6 mental damage just from picking up the item, and they take that damage again at the start of each of their turns if they continue to hold it.

If the wielder can cast arcane or occult spells, they can use the *talisman of the sphere* to more easily control a *sphere of annihilation*. This reduces the DC of the check to control the sphere or Sustain the Activation by 10.

Destruction The *talisman of the sphere* is destroyed if touched by a *sphere of annihilation*.

GEMS AND ART OBJECTS

Many people treasure gems for their brilliant colors and for the alchemical or even magical properties some have. Works of art and their value, meanwhile, vary as widely as the concept of beauty between cultures. They may be more elegant versions of useful items, or exist solely to be admired and envied.

Much like coins, gems and art objects are valuable currency worth their full Price when sold. When making a treasure hoard, you can choose gems or art objects you like, or roll randomly using percentile dice.

GEMS

Gems are naturally occurring minerals, typically in a crystalline form, or, in a few cases, organic material such as amber, coral, and pearls. All but the largest gems weigh about half as much as a coin, so about 2,000 gems is 1 Bulk. Unworked gems are worth half the Price of a finished gem and can serve as the minimum raw materials necessary to Craft the finished gem. Lesser semiprecious stones are level 0 items, moderate and greater semiprecious stones are 1st-level items, lesser and moderate precious stones are 4th-level items that require expert proficiency to Craft, and greater precious stones are 7th-level items that require master proficiency to Craft.

TABLE 2-23: GEMS

d%	Lesser Semiprecious Stones	Price
1-7	Agate	1d4×5 sp
8-14	Alabaster	1d4×5 sp
15-21	Azurite	1d4×5 sp
22-28	Hematite	1d4×5 sp
29-35	Lapis lazuli	1d4×5 sp
36-42	Malachite	1d4×5 sp
43-49	Obsidian	1d4×5 sp
50-56	Pearl, irregular freshwater	1d4×5 sp
57-63	Pyrite	1d4×5 sp
64-70	Rhodochrosite	1d4×5 sp
71-77	Quartz, rock crystal	1d4×5 sp
78-84	Shell	1d4×5 sp
85-92	Tiger's-eye	1d4×5 sp
93-100	Turquoise	1d4×5 sp
d%	Moderate Semiprecious Stones	Price
1-7	Bloodstone	1d4×25 sp
8-14	Carnelian	1d4×25 sp
15-21	Chrysoprase	1d4×25 sp
22-28	Citrine	1d4×25 sp
29-35	Ivory	1d4×25 sp
36-42	Jasper	1d4×25 sp
43-49	Moonstone	1d4×25 sp
50-56	Onyx	1d4×25 sp
57-63	Peridot	1d4×25 sp
64-70	Quartz, milky, rose, or smoky	1d4×25 sp
71-77	Sard	1d4×25 sp
78-84	Sardonyx	1d4×25 sp

d%	Moderate Semiprecious Stones	Price
85-92	Spinel, red or green	1d4×25 sp
93-100	Zircon	1d4×25 sp
d%	Greater Semiprecious Stones	Price
1-10	Amber	1d4×5 gp
11-20	Amethyst	1d4×5 gp
21-30	Chrysoberyl	1d4×5 gp
31-40	Coral	1d4×5 gp
41-50	Garnet	1d4×5 gp
51-60	Jade	1d4×5 gp
61-70	Jet	1d4×5 gp
71-80	Pearl, saltwater	1d4×5 gp
81-90	Spinel, deep blue	1d4×5 gp
91-100	Tourmaline	1d4×5 gp
d%	Lesser Precious Stones	Price
1-25	Aquamarine	1d4×50 gp
26-50	Opal	1d4×50 gp
51-75	Pearl, black	1d4×50 gp
76-100	Topaz	1d4×50 gp
d%	Moderate Precious Stones	Price
1-25	Diamond, small	1d4×100 gp
26-50	Emerald	1d4×100 gp
51-75	Ruby, small	1d4×100 gp
76-100	Sapphire	1d4×100 gp
d%	Greater Precious Stones	Price
1-25	Diamond, large	1d4×500 gp
26-50	Emerald, brilliant green	1d4×500 gp
51-75	Ruby, large	1d4×500 gp
76-100	Star sapphire	1d4×500 gp

ART OBJECTS

These pieces of artwork have listed values, but might be more valuable to a collector or someone with a personal connection. When including art objects, consider whether the PCs could discover this information and secure a greater reward. For instance, a dwarven crown might be worth 1,000 gp for its exquisite crafting, but even more to the dwarves who lost the crown of their first queen long ago. This could also be a plot hook for a later adventure.

On the other hand, the materials used to make an art object, such as the paint and the canvas of a painting, are worth far less than the finished object. Some art objects on Table 2-24 include uncommon or rare precious materials, though usually not in large enough amounts for other crafting purposes. If you're rolling randomly and don't want to give out an uncommon or rare material, roll again or modify the description (for instance, you might change the mithral crown in the major art objects list to a gold crown).

TABLE 2-24: SAMPLE ART OBJECTS

d%	Minor Art Object	Price
1-5	Elegant cloth doll	1d4 gp
6-10	Scrimshaw whale bone	1d4 gp
11-15	Illustrated book	1d4 gp
16-20	Brass statuette of a bull	1d4 gp
21-25	Carved wooden game set	1d4 gp
26-30	Set of six ivory dice	1d4 gp
31-35	Engraved copper ring	1d4 gp
36-40	Lapis lazuli pendant	1d4 gp
41-45	Hand mirror with decorated frame	1d4 gp
46-50	Colorful velvet half mask	1d4 gp
51-55	Set of decorated ceramic plates	1d4 gp
56-60	Leather flagon with Caydenite symbol	1d4 gp
61-65	Bronze bowl with wave imagery	1d4 gp
66-70	Brass anklet	1d4 gp
71-75	Iron cauldron with gargoyle faces	1d4 gp
76-80	Silver religious symbol	1d4 gp
81-85	Bronze brazier with Asmodean artwork	1d4 gp
86-90	Plain brass censer	1d4 gp
91-95	Simple sculpture	1d4 gp
96-100	Simple painting	1d4 gp
d%	Lesser Art Object	Price
1-5	Silk ceremonial armor	1d4×10 gp
6-10	Inscribed crocodile skull	1d4×10 gp
11-15	Illuminated manuscript	1d4×10 gp
16-20	Simple silver circlet	1d4×10 gp
21-25	Copper statuette of a salamander	1d4×10 gp
26-30	Alabaster and obsidian game set	1d4×10 gp
31-35	Silk fan decorated with turquoise	1d4×10 gp
36-40	Ceremonial dagger with onyx hilt	1d4×10 gp
41-45	Amphora with lavish scenes	1d4×10 gp
46-50	Colorful pastoral tapestry	1d4×10 gp
51-55	Chrysoberyl symbol of an evil eye	1d4×10 gp
56-60	Alabaster idol	1d4×10 gp
61-65	Silk mask decorated with citrines	1d4×10 gp
66-70	Set of decorated porcelain plates	1d4×10 gp
71-75	Etched copper ewer	1d4×10 gp
76-80	Brass scepter with amethyst head	1d4×10 gp
81-85	Bronze chalice with bloodstones	1d4×10 gp
86-90	Iron and rock crystal brazier	1d4×10 gp
91-95	Quality sculpture by an unknown	1d4×10 gp
96-100	Quality painting by an unknown	1d4×10 gp
d%	Moderate Art Object	Price
1-5	Porcelain doll with amber eyes	1d4×25 gp
6-10	Marble altar	1d4×25 gp
11-15	Parade armor with flourishes	1d4×25 gp
16-20	Silver coronet with peridots	1d4×25 gp
21-25	Moonstone and onyx game set	1d4×25 gp
26-30	Gold and garnet ring	1d4×25 gp
31-35	Ceremonial shortsword with spinels	1d4×25 gp
36-40	Silver statuette of a raven	1d4×25 gp
41-45	Porcelain vase inlaid with gold	1d4×25 gp
46-50	Enormous tapestry of a major battle	1d4×25 gp
51-55	Gold necklace with peridots	1d4×25 gp
56-60	Virtuoso silver flute	1d4×25 gp

d%	Moderate Art Object	Price
61-65	Coral idol of an elemental lord	1d4×25 gp
66-70	Silver mirror with gilded frame	1d4×25 gp
71-75	Silver flagon inscribed with fields	1d4×25 gp
76-80	Copper and spinel puzzle box	1d4×25 gp
81-85	Small cold iron cauldron with onyx	1d4×25 gp
86-90	Silver and jade censer	1d4×25 gp
91-95	Life-size sculpture by an expert	1d4×25 gp
96-100	Wide landscape by an expert	1d4×25 gp
d%	Greater Art Object	Price
1-5	Gilded ceremonial armor	1d4×250 gp
6-10	Ancient dragon skull etched with mystic sigils	1d4×250 gp
11-15	Original manuscript from a world-famous author	1d4×250 gp
16-20	Gold and aquamarine diadem	1d4×250 gp
21-25	Gold dragon statuette	1d4×250 gp
26-30	Jet and white gold game set	1d4×250 gp
31-35	Gold rapier with amethysts	1d4×250 gp
36-40	Gold urn with scenes of judgment	1d4×250 gp
41-45	Splendid lyre of world-famous lyrist	1d4×250 gp
46-50	Platinum-framed monocle	1d4×250 gp
51-55	Gold mask of a high priest	1d4×250 gp
56-60	Crystal dinner set, fine silverware	1d4×250 gp
61-65	Gold and opal bracelet	1d4×250 gp
66-70	Intricate silver and gold music box	1d4×250 gp
71-75	Jeweled orrery of the planes	1d4×250 gp
76-80	Gilded scepter with sapphire	1d4×250 gp
81-85	Fine gold spyglass	1d4×250 gp
86-90	Gold chalice with black pearls	1d4×250 gp
91-95	Towering sculpture by a master	1d4×250 gp
96-100	Famous portrait by a master	1d4×250 gp
d%	Major Art Object	Price
1-5	Jewel-encrusted gold altar	1d4×1,000 gp
6-10	Saint's bone with lost scriptures	1d4×1,000 gp
11-15	Previously lost volume from a legendary author	1d4×1,000 gp
16-20	Jeweled mithral crown	1d4×1,000 gp
21-25	Platinum dragon statuette	1d4×1,000 gp
26-30	Diamond ring with platinum band	1d4×1,000 gp
31-35	Star sapphire necklace	1d4×1,000 gp
36-40	Darkwood violin by a legend	1d4×1,000 gp
41-45	Platinum image of a fey noble with a bit of orichalcum	1d4×1,000 gp
46-50	Jeweled gold puzzle box	1d4×1,000 gp
51-55	Crystallized dragon heart	1d4×1,000 gp
56-60	Living flame shaped into a phoenix	1d4×1,000 gp
61-65	Phasing ether silk tapestry	1d4×1,000 gp
66-70	Solidified moment of time	1d4×1,000 gp
71-75	Tankard owned by Cayden Cailean	1d4×1,000 gp
76-80	Thought lens of astral essence	1d4×1,000 gp
81-85	Divine art piece created by Shelyn	1d4×1,000 gp
86-90	Chandelier crafted from dreams	1d4×1,000 gp
91-95	Enormous chryselephantine sculpture by a legend	1d4×1,000 gp
96-100	Major painting by a legend	1d4×1,000 gp

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AFFLICTIONS

Wherever there is life, there are insidious perils that threaten the health and well-being of living creatures. Some of these afflictions, including many diseases, are inherent to the natural world. Others, such as drugs, are crafted by people the world over for recreational, unscrupulous, or other uses. And some—curses being the most notorious—exist solely to cause harm to others.

Afflictions strike creatures with potent and often escalating results. This section presents a variety of curses, diseases, and drugs for use in your game. A broad sampling of poisons can be found beginning on page 550 of the *Core Rulebook*, and the rules for afflictions start on 457.

Depending on the tone of the campaign, the GM might want to roll secret saving throws for PCs affected by an affliction. This is particularly effective when the affliction is an element within a survival or horror game, or when it's part of a mystery.

CURSES

A curse is a manifestation of potent ill will. Curses typically have a single effect that takes place upon a failed saving throw and lasts a specified amount of time, or can be removed only by certain actions a character must perform or conditions they must meet. Rarely, curses will have stages; these follow the rules for afflictions.

Curses may come from a malicious action, such as a lich's Paralyzing Touch or a spell from an evil spellcaster. Guardians of a tomb or treasure might ward their charge with a curse as protection against thieves. In some rare cases, a curse might manifest as a response to a terrible act, such as a massacre. When using a curse in your game, assign the curse to an item, location, situation, or similar element. Then, decide on a trigger for the curse—such as a creature attempting to steal a warded book, destroy a work of art, or slay a specific creature. A curse can even be tied to a specific location, in which case it functions as a simple hazard. Once that trigger occurs, the curse affects the triggering creature or creatures. Each affected creature must attempt a saving throw against the curse; if they fail, they are subject to the effects specified in the curse's Effect entry.

CURSE OF NIGHTMARES

CURSE 2

CURSE ILLUSION MAGICAL MENTAL

This curse plagues you with terrible nightmares whenever you sleep, preventing you from resting properly.

Saving Throw DC 16 Will; **Effect** You must rest for 12 hours instead of 8 to avoid becoming fatigued and can't gain any benefits from resting or long-term rest. You can still make your daily preparations.

THEFT OF THOUGHT

CURSE 3

CURSE ENCHANTMENT MAGICAL MENTAL

This curse protects a single book and activates against any creature who Steals it.

Saving Throw DC 18 Will; **Effect** You begin to lose details from your memories, as well as a portion of your procedural memory. After being cursed, the first time you attempt a check using a skill in which you are trained or better, your proficiency rank in the skill used decreases by one rank for as long as you are cursed.

SLAYER'S HAUNT

CURSE 4

CURSE ILLUSION MAGICAL VISUAL

You are haunted by all those you have killed.

Saving Throw DC 19 Will; **Effect** You see all creatures around you as those you have slain, still bearing their wounds. You can't identify, Recall Knowledge about, or otherwise interact with these creatures in any way that involves seeing their true form without first succeeding at a Will save against the curse's DC to see through the illusion. On a critical failure for such a Will save, you become frightened 1.

COWARD'S ROOTS

CURSE 5

CURSE ENCHANTMENT FEAR MAGICAL MENTAL

You find all courage stolen from your heart. When faced with something frightening, you flee in terror or stand frozen in place.

Saving Throw DC 20 Will; **Effect** At the start of your turn, if you are frightened, you become your choice of immobilized or fleeing until the end of that turn.

CURSE OF THE RAVENOUS

CURSE 5

CURSE MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

This hideous curse kills through constant hunger. You become gaunt and repeatedly gnash your teeth.

Saving Throw DC 20 Fortitude; **Effect** No matter how much you eat, you aren't satiated. After 1 day, you begin starving (*Core Rulebook* 500). Each week, you receive a new saving throw against the curse.

WIZARD'S WARD

CURSE 6

ABJURATION CURSE MAGICAL

A wizard's ward is placed upon a single book, usually a spellbook. If you damage the book, you must attempt a save against the curse's effect.

Saving Throw DC 22 Will; **Effect** You take 5d6 damage of the same damage type as the damage you dealt to the book, and the damage can't be healed as long as the curse lasts. Repairing the book, including replacing any missing text, ends this curse.

OATH OF THE FLESH

CURSE 7

ABJURATION CURSE MAGICAL

When you swear an oath, you must obey that oath or suffer terrible consequences.

Saving Throw DC 23 Fortitude; **Effect** Each time you make a promise to someone, an ornate symbol representing that promise is magically carved into your flesh. Breaking any of these promises causes the symbol tattoo to grow into a gaping wound, dealing 3d6 slashing damage to you; damage from the curse can't be healed as long as the curse is still in effect.

SELLSWORD'S FOLLY

CURSE 9

CURSE EMOTION ENCHANTMENT MAGICAL MENTAL

Even the most experienced combat veteran becomes as reckless as a rookie when suffering from sellsword's folly.

Saving Throw DC 26 Will; **Effect** The chaos of combat overwhelms you. Each time you roll initiative for a combat encounter, you must attempt a new saving throw against the curse; on a failure, you become confused for 1 round. This is an incapacitation effect.

CURSE OF SLUMBER

CURSE 11

CURSE INCAPACITATION MAGICAL NECROMANCY SLEEP

This legendary curse sends you into a sleep indistinguishable from death.

Saving Throw DC 28 Fortitude; **Effect** You fall asleep for 1 round (or permanently on a critical failure) and seem to be dead; a creature must succeed at a DC 30 Medicine check to realize you are alive. Noise doesn't awaken you, but taking damage gives you a new saving throw against the curse.

REVILING EARTH

CURSE 12

CURSE DEATH MAGICAL NECROMANCY

A reviling earth curse usually appears across a specific geographical region, such as a ruined town, a necromancer's domain, or a similar area.

Saving Throw DC 30 Fortitude; **Effect** When you enter the area, you become doomed 1, or doomed 2 on a critical failure.

SPIRIT ANCHOR

CURSE 13

CURSE MAGICAL NECROMANCY NEGATIVE

This curse prevents your soul from moving on after death.

Saving Throw DC 31 Fortitude; **Effect** If you die while affected, your spirit is anchored to the Material Plane, and you become a ghost or other incorporeal undead.

UNENDING THIRST

CURSE 15

CURSE TRANSMUTATION MAGICAL

This curse kills through dehydration in the same vein as the curse of the ravenous, but with deadly speed.

Saving Throw DC 32 Fortitude; **Effect** You gain no benefit from drinking water or other liquids and begin suffering from thirst (*Core Rulebook* 500). Each day, you receive a new saving throw against the curse.

REVEILED OF NATURE

CURSE 18

CURSE EMOTION ENCHANTMENT MAGICAL MENTAL

This curse makes the hunter into the hunted, drawing the ire of animals wherever you go.

Saving Throw DC 38 Will; **Effect** Creatures of the natural world abhor you. Whenever an animal becomes aware of you, it must attempt a Will save against the curse. On a failure, it attacks you and fights to the death.

THIEF'S RETRIBUTION

CURSE 19

CONJURATION CURSE MAGICAL

This punishment causes you to lose something dear to you whenever you rob or steal. If you have nothing to lose, the curse exacts its punishment upon your body instead.

Saving Throw DC 39 Fortitude; **Effect** Each time you steal something, you lose something more valuable—this item is whisked away and can't be found again. Typically this item is one of greater monetary value, but it might be one of greater value in another sense, such as one of greater emotional value, or something you need to complete a task. If you aren't carrying anything of greater value at the time of the theft, you lose one of your limbs instead, taking 10d6 slashing damage and losing use of that limb. The damage can't be healed, nor the limb restored, until the stolen item is returned, even through use of spells like *regenerate*.

SWORD OF ANATHEMA

CURSE 20

CURSE DIVINE EVOCATION

With divine intervention, followers of a deity can bestow this curse upon an enemy of the faith.

Saving Throw DC 40 Will; **Effect** You are marked by the deity invoked as an enemy of the church. You gain weakness 10 to damage dealt by worshippers of that deity.

GRAVE CURSE

CURSE, LEVEL VARIES

CURSE NECROMANCY MAGICAL

A grave curse punishes you for stealing from a tomb or other resting place.

Saving Throw Will save, with a high spell DC for a monster of its level (page 65); **Effect** You are hounded by undead creatures of the same level as the curse. Every night, you must attempt a DC 15 flat check. On a failure, an incorporeal undead manifests to hassle and harry you throughout the night, retreating before it can take much damage and often preventing you from gaining a full night's rest. Whenever you enter a graveyard or other area where bodies are buried, you must succeed at the same flat check or a body animates as a corporeal undead (typically a skeleton or zombie) to attack you.

These undead are temporary and exist only to harry you; if you take control of the undead, move on, or otherwise avoid their attacks, incorporeal undead disincorporate and corporeal undead collapse into ordinary corpses. The curse can be removed by returning the stolen items to their resting place.

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DISEASES

Exposure to disease can be a hazard, such as when PCs come into contact with a plague-ridden corpse; such hazards grant XP as a simple hazard of the disease's level. When a disease gives a sickened condition that can't be reduced until it runs its course, that typically means the disease has symptoms such as a difficulty swallowing, loss of appetite, or nausea that make eating and drinking difficult but not impossible. Despite the condition's prohibition on eating or drinking, a creature can slowly and carefully eat and drink as long as they aren't in an encounter.

BOG ROT

DISEASE 0

DISEASE

Sometimes called bog foot, bog rot is caused by having waterlogged feet for an extended period of time. In addition to the usual cures for an affliction, bog rot can be cured through amputation of the affected appendages.

Saving Throw DC 13 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 day; **Stage 1** clumsy 1 (1 day); **Stage 2** clumsy 1 and a -5-foot status penalty to Speed (1 day); **Stage 3** clumsy 2 and a -10-foot status penalty to Speed (1 day)

SCARLET FEVER

DISEASE 1

DISEASE

The relatively simple sore throat caused by this disease leads many victims to initially dismiss it as a mild illness, but scarlet fever can be deadly if left untreated. You can't reduce your sickened condition while affected with scarlet fever.

Saving Throw DC 13 Fortitude; **Onset** 2 days; **Stage 1** sickened 1 (1 day); **Stage 2** sickened 2 (1 day); **Stage 3** sickened 3 and can't speak (1 day); **Stage 4** death

TETANUS

DISEASE 1

DISEASE

An infection introduced through open wounds, tetanus can produce stiffness, muscle spasms strong enough to break bones, and ultimately death.

Saving Throw DC 14 Fortitude; **Onset** 10 days; **Stage 1** clumsy 1 (1 week); **Stage 2** clumsy 2 and can't speak (1 day); **Stage 3** paralyzed with spasms (1 day); **Stage 4** death

TUBERCULOSIS

DISEASE 1

DISEASE

An extended respiratory disease, tuberculosis can pose particular challenges to spellcasters and some performers due to the intense coughing fits it produces.

Saving Throw DC 15 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 week; **Stage 1** carrier with no effects (1 week); **Stage 2** coughing requires you to succeed at a DC 5 flat check to Cast a Spell with a verbal component or Activate an Item with a command component (1 week); **Stage 3** fatigued, can't recover from the fatigued condition, and coughing requires a successful DC 15 flat check to Cast a Spell with a verbal component or Activate an Item with a command component (1 week); **Stage 4** unconscious (1 week); **Stage 5** death

MALARIA

DISEASE 2

DISEASE

A pernicious disease spread by bloodsucking insects, malaria sometimes enters long periods of dormancy. If you succumb to malaria, you may continue to be periodically affected by the disease, even if you're cured. You can't reduce your sickened condition while affected with malaria.

Saving Throw DC 16 Fortitude; **Onset** 10 days; **Stage 1** sickened 1 (1 day); **Stage 2** sickened 2 (1 day); **Stage 3** sickened 2, and disease recurs every 1d4 months even if cured (1 day); **Stage 4** unconscious (1 day); **Stage 5** death

BUBONIC PLAGUE

DISEASE 3

DISEASE

This widespread illness can sweep through entire communities, leaving few unaffected. The first indication of the disease is a telltale swelling of glands. In some cases, the disease can move into your lungs (pneumonic plague) or blood (septicemic plague), which is even more fatal. If you have bubonic plague, you can't remove the fatigued condition while affected.

Saving Throw DC 17 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 day; **Stage 1** fatigued (1 day); **Stage 2** enfeebled 2 and fatigued (1 day); **Stage 3** enfeebled 3, fatigued, and take 1d6 persistent bleed damage every 1d20 minutes (1 day)

SCARLET LEPROSY

DISEASE 4

DISEASE VIRULENT

Scarlet leprosy is widely feared for its devastating effects, crushing bones and organs while making recovery nearly impossible. Damage taken from scarlet leprosy can't be healed until the disease is cured.

Saving Throw DC 19 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 day; **Stage 1** 2d6 bludgeoning damage (1 day); **Stage 2** 2d6 bludgeoning damage, and whenever you gain the wounded condition, increase the condition value by 1 (1 day); **Stage 3** 4d6 bludgeoning damage and can't heal any Hit Point damage (1 day)

BONECHILL

DISEASE 5

DISEASE NECROMANCY PRIMAL

If you are wounded and exposed to persistent cold, you might contract bonechill.

Saving Throw DC 20 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 day; **Stage 1** clumsy 1 (1 day); **Stage 2** clumsy 2 and can't heal cold damage until this disease is cured (1 day); **Stage 3** clumsy 3 and all cold temperature effects are one step more severe for the victim (*Core Rulebook* 517) (1 day); **Stage 4** paralyzed and all cold temperature effects are one step more severe for the victim (1 day)

CHOKING DEATH

DISEASE 6

DISEASE

This disease is capable of wiping out nations or even entire continents. A few pockets of the disease still remain in Iobaria, keeping that region's population sparse.

Saving Throw DC 22 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 day; **Stage 1** hoarse

voice but no other symptoms (1 day); **Stage 2** drained 1 (1 day); **Stage 3** drained 2 and can't speak (1 day); **Stage 4** death

BLINDING SICKNESS

DISEASE 7

DISEASE

Endemic to jungles of the Mwangi Expanse, blinding sickness is transmitted by dirty water or the bites of certain creatures.

Saving Throw DC 23 Fortitude; **Stage 1** carrier with no effects (1 day); **Stage 2** enfeebled 1 (1 day); **Stage 3** enfeebled 2 (1 day); **Stage 4** enfeebled 2 and permanently blinded (1 day); **Stage 5** enfeebled 4 (1 day); **Stage 5** unconscious (1 day); **Stage 6** death

SEWER HAZE

DISEASE 7

DISEASE VIRULENT

Many healers and alchemists suspect that sewer haze has a supernatural origin, given its association with particularly strong ottyughs.

Saving Throw DC 23 Fortitude; **Onset** 2 days; **Stage 1** stupefied 2 (1 day); **Stage 2** drained 2 and stupefied 2 (1 day); **Stage 3** drained 3 and stupefied 3 (1 day)

NIGHTMARE FEVER

DISEASE 8

DISEASE NECROMANCY OCCULT

Thought to be caused by a night hag's curse, nightmare fever inflicts you with terrible nightmares, and you awaken with the wounds you received in your dreams. Some versions cause you to dream of being wounded by bludgeoning or piercing weapons, in which case you take that type of damage instead. Damage and the fatigued condition caused by the disease can't be healed until the disease is removed.

Saving Throw DC 25 Will; **Stage 1** 2d6 slashing damage and fatigued (1 day); **Stage 2** 4d6 slashing damage and fatigued (1 day); **Stage 3** 4d6 slashing damage, fatigued, and whenever you take slashing damage, you must succeed at a Will save against the disease's DC or become frightened 2 (1 day); **Stage 4** 6d6 slashing damage, fatigued, and whenever you take slashing damage, you must succeed at a Will save against the disease's DC or become paralyzed for 1 round (1 day); **Stage 5** 6d6 slashing damage and unconscious

BRAIN WORMS

DISEASE 11

DISEASE VIRULENT

Scholars suspect these brain parasites have an otherworldly or extraplanar origin. Though transmitted by the bites of infected targets, the disease remains relatively rare—most hosts are killed by the effects before they can pass it on. While infected, whenever you attack due to confusion, you bite your target (if you don't have a jaws or fangs attack, you deal piercing damage as an unarmed attack with damage equal to your lowest unarmed attack).

Saving Throw DC 28 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 day; **Stage 1** stupefied 2 (1 day); **Stage 2** stupefied 2, and whenever you take damage, you must succeed at a Will save against the disease's DC or become confused for 1 round (1 day); **Stage 3** stupefied 3, and whenever you take damage, you must succeed at a Will save

against the disease's DC or become confused for 1 minute (1 day); **Stage 4** stupefied 4 and confused, damage does not end the confused condition (1 day); **Stage 5** unconscious (1 day); **Stage 6** death

CRIMSON OOZE

DISEASE 15

DISEASE VIRULENT

This devastating fungus infects your hand and can be cured by amputating the limb before you reach stage 4.

Saving Throw DC 34 Fortitude; **Stage 1** clumsy 1 (1 day); **Stage 2** clumsy 2, and using the infected hand deals 3d6 persistent bleed damage (1 day); **Stage 3** clumsy 2, stupefied 2, and the infected hand is unusable (1 day); **Stage 4** clumsy 3, stupefied 3, and infected hand is permanently unusable (1 day); **Stage 5** confused, and damage does not end the confused condition (1 day); **Stage 6** death



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DRUGS

Drugs offer short-term benefits with harmful side effects and long-term consequences. These short-term benefits, such as euphoria, draw many to drugs, but addiction keeps users hooked long after their first dose. A character can voluntarily fail their initial save against a drug, but for each dose they consume, they must attempt a saving throw against addiction, a disease that represents cravings and withdrawal. Addiction is unique to each drug, so a character can be affected by multiple instances of addiction at once.

Certain drugs alter how addiction works for that drug, adding the virulent trait to the addiction, limiting the maximum stage a character can reach, or adding additional stages beyond those listed in the base affliction.

ADDICTION

DISEASE, LEVEL VARIES

Track the maximum stage you reach with each drug's addiction. This maximum stage is separate from your current addiction stage for the drug. The maximum stage can't be reduced, even if you fully remove the disease. When you take the drug, two things happen: you attempt a saving throw against addiction, and you suppress the effects of addiction for 1 day. Failing a save against addiction caused by taking the drug causes you to go to 1 stage higher than the maximum stage you had previously reached (2 stages higher on a critical failure). If you're currently suffering from addiction when you attempt a save from taking the drug, you can't improve your stage; if you succeed at the save, the stage remains the same as it was.

When you attempt your save against addiction each week, the stage you are currently at can't get worse—it can only stay the same or improve. The conditions from addiction can't be removed while you are affected by the addiction, and suppressing addiction by taking the drug only avoids the effects—it doesn't remove the disease.

Saving Throw Fortitude (DC equals that of the drug); **Onset** 1 day; **Stage 1** fatigued (1 week); **Stage 2** fatigued and sickened 1 (1 week); **Stage 3** fatigued, drained 1, and sickened 1 (1 week); **Stage 4** fatigued, drained 2, sickened 2, and stupefied 2 (1 week)

ALCOHOL

ITEM 0

ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE DRUG INGESTED POISON

Price 1 cp or more

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ♦ Interact

Alcohol is a common substance available in stunning variety. The Price of a dose of alcohol depends on the specific beverage. You can't recover from the sickened condition from alcohol while affected.

If you fail a saving throw against alcohol other than initial saves, the affliction's stage doesn't increase; the only way to increase the stage of alcohol's affliction is to consume more alcohol.

Saving Throw DC 12 Fortitude; **Onset** 10 minutes; **Stage 1** +1 item bonus to saving throws against fear effects (10 minutes); **Stage 2** flat-footed, +1 item bonus to saving throws against fear effects (10 minutes); **Stage 3** clumsy 1, flat-footed, stupefied 2

(10 minutes); **Stage 4** clumsy 2 and sickened 2 (10 minutes); **Stage 5** clumsy 2, sickened 2, and stupefied 2 (10 minutes); **Stage 6** unconscious (8 hours); **Stage 7** death

BLOODEYE COFFEE

ITEM 0

ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE DRUG INGESTED POISON

Price 5 sp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ♦ Interact

A strong blend including several spices common in the Padishah Empire of Kelesh, bloodeye coffee is a favorite morning drink across the Inner Sea region. The maximum addiction stage of bloodeye coffee never progresses beyond stage 1.

Saving Throw DC 14 Fortitude; **Onset** 10 minutes; **Maximum Duration** 8 hours; **Stage 1** +1 item bonus to AC and saves to which you are taking penalties caused by the fatigued condition (10 minutes); **Stage 2** stupefied 1 (1 hour); **Stage 3** can't recover from fatigued (1 day, after which the drug ends)

FLAYLEAF

ITEM 0

ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE DRUG INGESTED INHALED POISON

Price 1 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ♦ Interact

The flayleaf plant is relatively common, though the mildly euphoric effects of smoking its dried leaves increase when it's sourced from plants specifically grown to produce such effects.

Saving Throw DC 12 Fortitude; **Onset** 10 minutes; **Maximum Duration** 4 hours; **Stage 1** +1 item bonus to saving throws against mental effects (1 hour); **Stage 2** fatigued and +1 item bonus to saving throws against mental effects (1 hour); **Stage 3** fatigued and stupefied 1 (1 hour); **Stage 4** fatigued, frightened 2, stupefied 2 (1 hour)

BLOOD SAP

ITEM 1

ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE DRUG INGESTED POISON

Price 4 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ♦ Interact

This potent drug is distilled from a certain tropical vine into a deep-red syrup that, over time, stains the user's lips and teeth a vivid shade of red.

Saving Throw DC 16 Fortitude; **Onset** 10 minutes; **Maximum Duration** 3 hours; **Stage 1** drained 1, +1 item bonus to weapon and unarmed attack rolls, Acrobatics checks, and Athletics checks (10 minutes); **Stage 2** slowed 1 (1 hour)

REFINED PESH

ITEM 1

ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE DRUG INGESTED INHALED POISON

Price 2 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ♦ Interact

When eaten or smoked, pesh gives users a sense of well-being, sometimes with hallucinations, aggression, and exhaustion.

Saving Throw DC 12 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 minute; **Maximum Duration** 6 hours; **Stage 1** stupefied 1 and a +2 item bonus to

saves versus fear effects (1 minute); **Stage 2** 1 temporary Hit Point per level (first time you reach this stage only), +2 item bonus to saves versus fear effects, clumsy 1, and stupefied 1 (1 minute); **Stage 3** clumsy 2 and stupefied 2 (1 hour)

SHIVER

ITEM 3

ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE DRUG INGESTED POISON

Price 10 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

Activate ♦ Interact

A compound produced from the hallucinogenic venom of certain spiders, shiver is common in black markets. The addiction to shiver has the virulent trait.

Saving Throw DC 19 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 4 hours; **Stage 1** whenever you become frightened, reduce that condition's value by 1 (10 minutes); **Stage 2** clumsy 2 (1 hour); **Stage 3** asleep (1 hour)

DREAMTIME TEA

ITEM 4

ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE DRUG INGESTED POISON

Price 13 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

Activate ♦ Interact

This lemony tea blended from rare Vudrani herbs and flowers is widely circulated by occult circles looking to transcend the boundaries of reality. The saving throw for addiction to dreamtime tea is DC 19.

Saving Throw DC 21 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 30 minutes; **Stage 1** stupefied 2 (1 minute); **Stage 2** unconscious and can ask a question with the effects of *augury* except the flat check DC is 10 (10 minutes)

ZERK

ITEM 4

ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE DRUG INJURY POISON

Price 20 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

Activate ♦ Interact

This bitter paste is used among some gladiatorial rings for its short-term benefits in a fight.

Saving Throw DC 20 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 1 hour; **Stage 1** +2 item bonus to Perception rolls for initiative, and if you have an addiction to zerk, your melee weapon and unarmed attacks deal an extra 2 damage during the first round of a combat encounter (1 minute); **Stage 2** drained 1 (1 hour)

CYTILLES

ITEM 5

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE DRUG INGESTED POISON

Price 30 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

Activate ♦ Interact

Deros use cytillesh in a variety of ways, and some surface-dwellers seek out the fungus for their own use. Memories lost to cytillesh can be restored through *modify memory*. The save for addiction to cytillesh is DC 20, and the addiction has the virulent trait.

Saving Throw DC 15 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 8 hours;

DRUGS IN YOUR GAME

Drugs are socially complex, and including them in your game has the potential to make some of your players uncomfortable—particularly players who have struggled with substance abuse themselves or seen friends and family members go through that struggle. As with any potentially difficult subject matter, you should discuss the role drugs play in your game with your players and ensure that all the players at the table are comfortable with the material; if they aren't, avoid the topic.

If you do include drugs in your game, consider the role they'll play. In some campaigns, drugs might simply be an element of flavor and a tool characters use to reach their goals; in others, the side effects and risk of addiction might be a terrible price to pay. The rules assume something of a middle path, where drugs are addictive substances that may provide a short-term benefit but have consequences. To make drugs more accessible in your game, remove some of the more severe stages of addiction. To make them more dangerous, add the virulent trait to the addiction affliction, add more stages with increasingly severe effects, or increase the DC of the save against the addiction by 1 for every use of the drug, decreasing back to normal over time as they stop using the drug.

Stage 1 stupefied 1 (1 minute); **Stage 2** lose all memories made in the previous hour (1 hour)

ELVEN ABSINTHE

ITEM 5

ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE DRUG INGESTED POISON

Price 25 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

Activate ♦ Interact

Specialists in Kyonin prepare this emerald-green beverage.

Saving Throw DC 20 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 hour; **Maximum Duration** 1 day; **Stage 1** +2 item bonus to Diplomacy and Performance checks (1 hour); **Stage 2** drained 2 (1 hour); **Stage 3** stupefied 4 (1 hour)

SCOUR

ITEM 8

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE DRUG INGESTED INHALED POISON

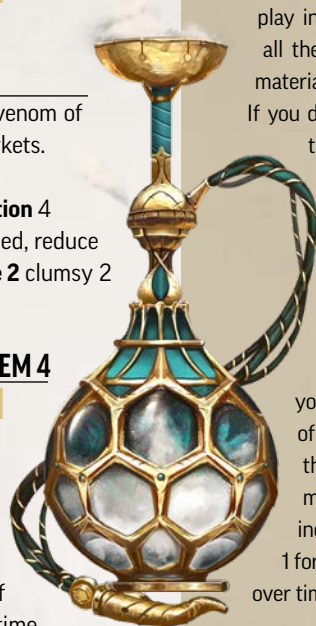
Price 80 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

Activate ♦ Interact

This gritty powder improves responsiveness but suppresses thoughts and leaves you weakened. The saving throw for addiction to scour is DC 30, and the addiction is virulent.

Saving Throw DC 25 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 hour; **Maximum Duration** 6 hours; **Stage 1** stupefied 2 and +2 item bonus to Reflex saves and Dexterity-based skill checks (1 hour); **Stage 2** fatigued (1 hour); **Stage 3** drained 2 and fatigued (1 hour)



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BUILDING WORLDS

As a Game Master, you control the details of the world your players explore. The Age of Lost Omens campaign setting is a lush world suitable for countless adventures, but you might prefer to adventure in entirely new worlds, where every aspect of the setting and story is yours to decide!

Building your own campaign world can be a deeply fulfilling creative process, as it lets you bring to life the exact setting you envision. It gives you great flexibility, in that you can build only as much as you need for the next few adventures, and you can adapt the world on the fly to meet the demands of your story. It also gives you great control, allowing you to build precisely the setting you need for the story you want to tell. Finally, it bypasses some of the issues that can come with playing within an existing campaign setting, where you might create a narrative that contradicts published canon, or your players might stumble across major plot or setting spoilers. Whatever your world-building goals, this chapter guides you through the design process step by step.

DESIGN APPROACH

World building can be approached in many ways, but it fundamentally comes down to a simple preference. Do you start at a high level and zoom in, or do you start small and build up? This section outlines a largely top-down approach, but you can design from the bottom up simply by starting at the end of this section and working backwards. Either way, you may find yourself skipping between sections as inspiration strikes—and that's OK!

When building a world, there's a risk of becoming overwhelmed by the sheer number of decisions to be made. Remember that you don't need to make every decision for every aspect of your world all at once. Focus first on the elements you need for your story and the game, then add as much of the rest as you'd like. You'll also want to allow room for input from your players—gaming sessions are more memorable and engaging when the storytelling experience is shared between everyone at the table (page 32 has more information on players contributing to the narrative).

Before you decide anything else, however, you should establish your concept and your goals. Do you envision a high-magic steampunk setting where humans are a tiny minority? A world where the only magic derives from squabbling pantheons of gods whose followers are caught up in their wars for power? A quaint town isolated from an otherwise-unknown world beyond a vast, impenetrable forest of mist-choked, skeletal trees? Are you designing a world for a multi-year campaign, or for a fast-paced one-shot adventure? Having an idea in mind will help steer your choices as you build your world, and knowing your goals will help you focus on building what you need.

TOP DOWN

The top-down approach is great if you have a lot of time to dedicate to world building. When designing a setting from the top down, your initial focus is on the big picture. You may already have an idea of the big movers and shakers of your world or your multiverse. You may want to chronicle a thousand years or more of the setting's history. You may have already sketched out a world map with continents, nations, and trade routes spanning the globe. This approach begins with broad generalities that get more detailed as you design and during play.

BOTTOM UP

With a bottom-up approach to world building, you start small and local. Focus on the starting location and immediate needs of your campaign, then expand outward as the story unfolds. This strategy works well for those with less time to devote to world building, as you need to prepare only the minimum detail necessary to entice your players toward adventure, fleshing out your world only as the campaign requires it.

THE WORLD

While world building might include building much more than a single planet, most adventures occur entirely on one world. It's a good idea to have a broad understanding of that world as a whole.

PLANETARY BASICS

When designing the physical features of a campaign world, you'll want to determine its shape and the general distribution of landmasses. You can also establish the world's size, though note the scale of a world generally has a fairly small impact on the adventures taking place there.

SHAPE

In a fantasy setting, the shape of your world need not be spherical as governed by the laws of physics. It could be any shape you desire, and it need not be a planet at all!

Globe: Barring some catastrophe, worlds in our reality are roughly spherical due to the influence of gravity.

Hollow World: What if the landmasses and civilizations of a world existed on the inner surface of a hollow sphere? In such a world, the horizon would climb upwards, permitting creatures to see landmarks at extraordinary distances. Light might emanate from a sun-like orb in the world's center, from various other natural or magical sources, or not at all.

Irregular: What if your world is flat, a toroid, or shaped into a cylinder, cube, or other polyhedron? What if it's something even stranger? With such an unusual shape, you may need to decide how gravity, atmosphere, and other details function.

LANDMASS

The next major step in world creation is to sketch out the planet's oceans and major landmasses. On Earth, these geological features are the result of plate tectonics. In a fantasy world, however, the oceans might have been cleaved from the land by the actions of titans, or the continents shaped to suit a god's whims. The following are some common landmass types.

Archipelago: A stretch of vast ocean, dotted by chains of small island groups, atolls, and islets.

Major Islands: A region of seas dominated by large islands, each several hundred miles across.

Island-Continent: An enormous island nearly the size of a continent, surrounded by ocean.

Continent: A substantial landform that (usually) rests on a tectonic plate and gradually shifts in position over geologic timescales.

Supercontinent: An assembly of the world's continental blocks into a single immense landmass.

ENVIRONMENT

The environment and terrain of a region can pose as much of a challenge to an adventuring party as any of the foes they face. The following section references the environment categories beginning on page 512 of the *Core Rulebook*.

COMMON ENVIRONMENTS

The following environments are common enough that they might appear in nearly any adventure or world.

Aquatic: Oceans, seas, lakes, and other large waterways are aquatic environments.

Arctic: Arctic environments usually appear near the northern and southern extremes of a world, though extreme elevation, unusually shaped worlds, and supernatural forces could result in arctic terrain elsewhere.

Desert: Deserts can appear anywhere on a world where precipitation is scant, even along some oceans. Any large landmasses that entirely lack bodies of water are likely to be deserts.

Forest: The composition of a forest depends on the climate and the elevation, with thick jungles more common near an equator, hardwood forests in more temperate zones, and evergreens at higher latitudes and elevations. Most worlds have a tree line—an elevation above which trees can't grow.

Mountain: A world's highest peaks can stretch tens of thousands of feet above sea level. This category also includes hills, which are typically no more than 1,000 feet tall.

Plains: Mostly flat and unobstructed, plains are usually at lower elevations, but they can also be found at higher elevation on plateaus.

Urban: Cities and settlements are urban environments. These areas are detailed in *Settlements*, beginning on page 132.

Swamp: Wide floodplains, shallow lakes, and marshes can appear at most latitudes.

EXTREME ENVIRONMENTS

Some adventures lead to fantastic reaches of the world or the multiverse that are seldom tread by mortals.

Aerial: A world might include windy realms of floating islands and castles in the clouds.

Glacier: Massive sheets of dense ice, constantly moving under their own immense weight, glaciers are frozen wastelands riddled with columns of jagged ice and snow-covered crevasses.

Volcanic: Hellish landscapes of molten lava, burning ash, and scorching temperatures pose immediate danger.

Undersea: A subset of aquatic environments, undersea environments are those areas submerged beneath the waves.

Underground: Some worlds have deep natural caverns, while others have extensive winding tunnels and expansive realms below the surface.

MAPPING A WORLD

Many Game Masters like to have an overland map for their local region, nation, or even the whole world. The primary goal of this scale of map is to designate sites of import to the campaign; you need not detail every hamlet or woodland grove, but having a sense of the major features can help you and the other players visualize the world in which they're playing.

Step 1. Coastlines: The easiest first step is to separate land from sea. Regional maps may only have a single shoreline, if any. At larger map scales, consider the placement of major islands, archipelago chains, atolls, and islets. A world map should consider the size and placement of continents.

Step 2. Topography: Pencil in a rough ridgeline for each mountain range in the region. Mountain ranges are common along coastlines where continental plates push together. If extended into the sea, mountain ranges typically result in a chain of offshore islands. Indicate hills in the regions adjacent to the mountains and elsewhere as necessary to demonstrate elevation. Unmarked terrain on an overland map is usually lowland plains.

Step 3. Watercourses: It's important to keep in mind that rivers flow downstream, from high elevation toward the sea, always taking the path of least resistance. Powerful watercourses might carve canyons or gorges over millennia, but they should never cross through mountain ranges. On a similar note, watercourses don't branch—tributaries join into rivers as they flow downstream.

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CAMPAIGN REFERENCE

Before the campaign starts, you might want to begin the outline for a campaign reference: a living document that you can easily review and annotate during gameplay and that records the geography, factions, history, characters, and plots central to your campaign.

Step 4. Terrain and Environment: Sketch in interesting terrain features such as forests, deserts, or tundra. You may want to differentiate these environs, separating coniferous and deciduous forests from tropical jungles or arctic taiga. Environs not specifically called out on an overland map are typically presumed to be some variety of grassland.

Step 5. Civilization: Now you're ready to place the elements of civilization. Major cities should typically be located near fresh water and natural resources. Major roads connect larger settlements, circumventing forests and other difficult environs, but they may wind through mountain passes when lucrative commerce demands it. Add smaller settlements along your roads, further connected by smaller roads and trails. Finally, draw political boundaries and mark other sites of interest.

CIVILIZATION

With the major geographical features and terrain of your world decided, you'll next want to establish significant nations and settlements.

When it comes to designing a world's cultures, you might want to focus primarily on those areas the party is likely to explore first. This allows you to establish the details and depth of one region's peoples before expanding out to address others. That's not to say you shouldn't have ideas about the cultures beyond your starting settlement—it just means you don't need to decide every detail of every culture all at once.

As always, you don't need to demarcate every realm on the globe or indicate every town, hamlet, and thorp. Keep your focus on what you need for your story and your adventure—leaving terra incognita can lead to stories down the road as the party ventures further from home.

SOCIETAL BENCHMARKS

The following sections can help you establish certain truths about your world as a whole. From there, you can decide the details of specific cultural groups, including whether they deviate from these global standards.

TECHNOLOGY

Throughout history, a major driver of world culture has been the continuous advancement of technology in warfare, agriculture, and industry. The following categories roughly approximate real-world technological levels, but progress might vary on your world. What heights of technology have been achieved? Have any groups fallen behind or leaped ahead?

Primeval: Weapons and tools in this early era are crafted primarily from bone, wood, or stone. Knowledge of stonemasonry allows early civilizations to raise stone walls and buildings.

Ancient: Advancements in mining and metallurgy lead to weapons and tools made from bronze. Crop rotation and storage in granaries ensure greater survival in times of famine. Trade between river and coastal settlements is aided by oar- and sail-powered galleys. Chariots come into strong use during warfare.

Classical: Superior military tactics and engineered roads allow for rapid deployment of infantry wielding iron weapons and aided by mounted cavalry. Advances in complex irrigation and construction of aqueducts lead to an abundance of harvest foods and dramatic improvements to sanitation.

Medieval: Warfare in this era is defined by iron armor, crossbows, and weapons forged of fine steel.

Enlightenment: The development of black powder and muzzle-loaded, single-shot firearms greatly changes warfare, making plate armor mostly obsolete. Larger ships permit ocean crossings and long-range trade to distant shores. The printing press speeds literacy and the dissemination of new ideas.

Steam: Steam engines replace conveyances drawn by animal power or sail, leading to a significant shift from wood fuel to coal. Further advances in science lead to dirigible airships and observation balloons. Simple firearms are replaced by repeating revolvers and bolt action rifles.

DIVINE INVOLVEMENT

What is the nature of the gods? Do they even exist? If so, are they omnipotent and omniscient? How does a follower request their divine favor? The answers to these questions will help you determine how strongly divine faith impacts the cultures of your world.

None: Deities do not exist in this world, or if they do, they are oblivious to or completely unconcerned with mortal affairs. If they exist, they don't make their presence known, nor do they grant power to their worshippers.

Limited: Deities exist, though they remain aloof from the mortal world and make their divine presence known only to a chosen few.

Accepted: Divine influence is an accepted fact of everyday life. Their will is enacted through priests and organized religions. Divine avatars may appear in the world during extreme circumstances.

Ubiquitous: Deities live among mortals, exerting their divine will directly. Gods rule entire nations, commanding absolute obedience from their faithful followers.

MAGIC

Does magic exist? If so, which traditions are available? What are the sources of a spellcaster's power, and how do they gain and channel that magic?



No Magic: Magic of any kind does not exist in this world. Spells and magic effects do not function. Consider the variants on page 196 to handle the lack of magic items.

Low Magic: Magic is mysterious and taboo. The few practitioners of the mystical arts are feared or shunned. Again, consider the variants on page 196 to handle the relative scarcity of magic items.

Common: Magic is an accepted fact of everyday life, though its mysteries are beyond the reach of most people. Magic portals and gates can whisk travelers “in the know” halfway across the world or to the other side of the multiverse.

High Magic: Magic and magical items are commonplace in society. It may be as easy to learn spellcasting as it is to learn a new language. Magical objects simulate various modern technologies.

DESIGNING NATIONS

For any nation you establish in your setting, you’ll want to provide at least a minimal description—the core concept of that nation. The amount of additional detail you provide depends on the needs of your story. You likely want to establish enough information to create a stat block (page 130) for the nation your adventurers are from, any nations they’re likely to spend significant time in, and those nations’ main allied and enemy nations, if they are likely to become part of the plot.

When building a nation, remember that the various elements connect to the history of the land and its people, its relationships with nearby nations, and the current residents. This interconnectedness will help you build a wealth of story hooks and provide immersive detail for your players.

Beyond those basic details, the following considerations can help flesh out the nations in your setting.

LOCATION, SIZE, AND POPULATION

Major geographical boundaries, such as mountains, seas, and large rivers, often present natural borders for a realm. Depending on its leadership, culture, and the resources available, a country may be as small as a city-state or as large as a continent-sweeping empire. Barring widely available technological or magical travel and communication, most nations remain relatively small (only a few hundred miles across), simply because it becomes too difficult for a single governing entity to oversee and maintain the entirety of a larger state.

National populations ebb and flow due to a multitude of external factors. Advances in sanitation, medicine, and agriculture can spur dramatic population growth, while war, famine, or plague can devastate it. As a rule, smaller nation-states have a population around a hundred thousand, while a continent-spanning empire could swell to well over a hundred million.



CONSCIENTIOUS CULTURE DESIGN

Creating fantasy cultures is a delicate topic, as it can be all too easy to create a culture or a group based on damaging stereotypes or simplistic reductions of real-world groups. Creating entire cultures out of harmful genre tropes such as “jungle savage” or “noble samurai” reduces real-world cultures to caricatures and perpetuates stereotypes about people from those cultures. Taking inspiration from the real world is wonderful—our world is filled with an incredible diversity of cultures and peoples—but you should do so with care and respect for those sources.

Population size is only part of the equation. Figuring out the ancestry ratios of that population and brainstorming how the members of various ancestries interact can often lead to interesting story ideas, or at least give you some jumping-off points when dreaming up how the nation was founded and its later history.

CULTURAL HALLMARKS

What elements of the nation’s predominant culture stand out? A nation might have an unusual stance on religion, a specific demographic, distinctive natural features, noteworthy political views, or any number of unique elements that differentiate it from other nations in your region. These hallmarks can inform your decisions about many other aspects of the nation.

HISTORY

How did the nation come to be? Has it stood since time immemorial, a bastion of stability while the rest of the world changes around it? Perhaps it was built over the ruins of another civilization, destroyed by some forgotten calamity. Or perhaps it is a young nation, born recently amid ongoing strife in your world. What remnants of the past can be found, or has the past been deliberately hidden? How have the residents of the nation adapted to change, and in what ways have they failed to do so?

ECONOMY AND POLITICAL STANCES

Determine the key resources and industries that drive the nation’s economy. The availability of natural resources can establish national boundaries, local industry, and other elements of the resident society. For example, an area with few resources might have a nomadic society, while a nation rich in resources might develop an opulent mercantile class.

These resources can also affect international relationships. An area poor in a specific resource might have a strong trade relationship with a nearby nation that has it, or they might be at war! Nations also disagree about political structures, public policy, religion, and any number of other factors.

You’ll also want to consider the significant NPCs of each nation. This includes the official ruler, but it also includes other major players, whether they act in an official capacity or entirely behind the scenes.

BUILDING SETTLEMENTS

In Pathfinder, settlements are where characters can rest, recharge, retrain, and dedicate themselves to other downtime activities all in relative peace. Traditionally, an adventuring band comes together in some kind of settlement, be it a small hamlet nestled on the border of some wild frontier or a bustling port city at the heart of a nation. Some adventures take place entirely within a single settlement, while in others the party visits settlements only briefly between their adventures in the wilderness.

The first thing you should consider when building a settlement is its role in your story. Is this a major metropolis the heroes will visit again and again during their adventures? A backwater village where their adventures begin? The distant capital from which an evil tyrant issues cruel edicts? The settlement’s campaign role will inform many of the other decisions you make about the place.

Once you know why you need the settlement, consider why it would exist in the world. Settlements are typically founded near sources of fresh drinking water; most commonly along a riverbank or a place with access to adequate wells or springs. They additionally require some kind of transit to other places, either roads or waterways. While it may be easier to create a village or city merely to serve the characters’ needs, determining what function it has independent of the characters adds verisimilitude and can provide hooks for further stories.

Settlements, on page 132, describes the components of a settlement stat block, which you should create for any settlement you expect your characters to visit. The process of creating that stat block will help you further flesh out your community.

MAPPING A SETTLEMENT

Don’t underestimate the usefulness of sketching a map of significant settlements, like the one where your adventure starts. This isn’t intended to be a picture-perfect rendition drawn to scale, but rather to outline the rough shape and size of the settlement. Be sure to highlight a few key structures useful to the campaign. For more inspiration, see the section on Drawing Maps (page 52).

Step 1. City Layout: The layout of a settlement is as unique as the terrain upon which it is settled. First, decide the major trade route for the settlement. This is typically a river, which brings fresh water, fish, and fast transport to the populace. Larger cities can sustain additional growth with access to a deep-water harbor or a major overland trade road. Even settlements conceived with a grid plan tend to stretch along established trade routes before expanding outwards.

Step 2. Districts: Towns with a population over a thousand typically have defensive walls. As a settlement grows further in size and population, additional stone fortifications are often constructed beyond the city center, which further segment the city into districts or boroughs.

A metropolis, for example, might have several distinct neighborhoods: Castle Ward, Noble Quarter, Temple Hill, the Gardens, Scholars' Court, Artisan Plaza, the docks, the slums, and so forth.

Step 3. Markets and Shops: Designate one or more open spaces in the settlement for a market square. This marketplace typically grows in the city center, along a major road intersecting the settlement's primary trade route. Lining the perimeter of the temporary tents and stalls of a bazaar are permanent retail shops offering pricier goods and services. Here in the beating heart of city commerce, adventurers can arm themselves for upcoming expeditions or sell their ill-gotten gains once making it back to the settlement.

Step 4. Inns: Heroes need a place to celebrate and recover between adventures. In addition to both public and private lodging, a settlement's inns often serve food and drink. As with the town market, inns are commonly built in central locations where trade roads meet. In your campaign, inns are ideal locations to spread gossip, introduce notable NPCs, and initiate quests. For the right price, innkeepers might rent strongboxes to secure money and other valuables between adventures.

Step 5. Landmarks: To give your cities a sense of personality and local flavor, design a handful of iconic landmarks for the PCs to visit. Memorable names make these landmarks more interesting. A random observatory might be noteworthy, but the Celestial Watchtower has an air of intrigue that could lead to a fun adventure hook.

RELIGION

The greatest stories from myth and legend speak of immortals with incredible powers of creation and destruction. Some meddle in the affairs of mortals, shaping heroes and history at a whim, while others remain aloof or oblivious to the mortal world. Regardless of the world you're building, religion (or even the absence thereof) shapes the people and the stories you tell.

THEOLOGY

Religious traditions are commonly categorized by their belief in one or more divine entities.

Polytheism: This belief system posits the existence of many gods. Polytheistic gods typically espouse particular areas of concern and often reflect the appearance of their worshippers. The primary religious philosophy of the Age of Lost Omens is polytheistic.

Dualism: This philosophy espouses an enduring conflict between two diametrically opposed cosmic forces; most commonly good and evil or law and chaos. Acolytes of each faith almost always see themselves as righteous, and those of the contrasting belief as false.

Monotheism: A monotheistic doctrine recognizes the existence of only one true god. The supreme deity may exhibit more than one aspect yet remain a single entity, like Gozreh from the Age of Lost Omens.

Pantheism: Divine power arises from the universe itself, or as a byproduct of the collective power of many deities sharing some common facet, either way forming a vast, all-encompassing divine entity. Worshippers sometimes appeal to or devote themselves to specific fundamental concepts or aspects of the universe.

Animism: Rather than worshipping gods associated with souls and spiritual essence from beyond, animism sees the life force in each part of the world, whether it be the trees of an old-growth forest or a towering waterfall. An example of animism in the Age of Lost Omens is the connection between the Shoanti people and their totems, which they forge a relationship with when they come of age.

Atheism: In some campaign worlds, the gods have all died, abandoned their worshippers, or never existed at all. Mortals of this world may still cling to belief and establish religions in the name of the divine, but there are no true deities to answer their prayers.

PANTHEONS

In polytheistic traditions, a pantheon is a divine hierarchy of multiple (or even all) deities.

Universal: All deities in the setting belong to a single pantheon. Different cultures might have their own names for the god of magic, for instance, but only a single deity answers their prayers.

Ancestral or Regional: Each ancestry or region worships its own distinct pantheon. These pantheons coexist in the same cosmology but establish control in separate divine realms. Across the cosmos, several gods from disparate pantheons may share the same area of concern, but they seldom compete for worshippers from rival pantheons.

Competitive: The world contains smaller regional pantheons competing for mortal worship. Only one deity of a specific area of concern may ascend to greater power across all the pantheons. As such, deities typically have little loyalty to their own pantheons and may actually switch to another pantheon if it earns them additional worshippers.

None: The deities of this multiverse act as individuals with no familial ties or common agenda binding them to each other.

DEITIES

These immortal beings command vast power and influence fueled by the faith and souls of mortal worshippers. In Pathfinder, deities also dictate some of the abilities of those champions and clerics who channel their power. When designing deities, you'll need to include the divine statistics and devotee benefits described below.

DIVINE RANK

Gods are usually ranked in a divine hierarchy, from newly ascended godlings to almighty creator gods of unfathomable power.

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God: Taking a position atop the divine pyramid, gods command near unlimited power and resources. Their mortal congregations are large and (usually) well funded.

Demigod: Demigods still possess a great deal of power, though often in subservience to another god or simply inferior to the power of a full god.

Quasi Deity: The weakest rank of divinity, many quasi deities are recently ascended mortals who attained their deific powers through ritual apotheosis, or planar natives who have amassed divine power of their own.

DIVINE STATISTICS

In Pathfinder, deities are not only a narrative element of the world, but also a mechanical component of some classes.

Alignment: A deity's alignment reflects their innate moral and ethical outlook. In the Lost Omens setting, most deities maintain realms tied to the Outer Plane that matches their alignment.

Areas of Concern: Each deity has one or more areas of concern they have divine influence over. These portfolios typically embrace universal concepts, such as honor, night, or tranquility. Deities with similar areas of concern may work in common cause or against each other, depending on their goals and divine rank.

Edicts: Every deity has edicts, which are those tenets they require their faithful—especially divinely empowered clergy like champions and clerics—to promote in the world. A deity usually has one to three simple and straightforward edicts.

Anathema: The opposite of edicts, anathema are those things a deity will not abide. Champions and clerics must avoid their deity's anathema or risk losing their divine powers, and even lay worshippers usually feel guilty for performing such acts, as they will be weighed against them in the afterlife. Like edicts, a deity usually has two to three simple and straightforward elements to their anathema.

Follower Alignments: Champions and clerics can gain power from deities only if they share a compatible moral disposition. Usually these allowed alignments are chosen from those within one step of the deity's alignments, with NG, LN, CN, or NE deities rarely allowing N champions and clerics. Less restrictive deities are rarer and occur most often when the deity has multiple aspects or a particularly wide view of things.

DEVOTEE BENEFITS

Deities grant favored status and special power to the most fervent and influential of their flock.

Divine Font: Clerics channel a deity's divine power as a font of negative or positive energy. Most often, good-aligned deities grant *heal* while evil deities grant *harm*, with neutral deities most often offering a choice between the two. However, there's nothing inherently good about positive energy or evil about negative energy, so a specific deity's divine font may vary based on their areas of concern.

Divine Skill: Champions and clerics automatically gain the trained proficiency rank in their deity's divine skill. Assign the deity one skill that synergizes well with their areas of concern. For example, Intimidation would be appropriate for a god of tyranny, or Deception for a goddess of trickery.

Favored Weapon: Clerics gain access to their deity's favored weapon as well as the trained proficiency rank with it; warpriest clerics gain additional benefits. Every deity has a favored weapon. Because the benefits of having an advanced favored weapon are very strong, you should assign simple or martial favored weapons unless a deity is so thematically linked with an advanced weapon that you need to give them one.

Domains: Each deity grants a number of domains that reflect their divine areas of concern. Champions and clerics can learn the domain spells from their deity's domains. Pathfinder's deities each have four domains, and many have one or more alternative domains. Though this number is usually enough to convey a deity's portfolio and give players sufficient options, you can give your deities as many domains as you like.

Cleric Spells: When preparing spells, clerics can choose from specific spells granted by the deity, in addition to those available on the divine spell list. A deity always grants a 1st-level spell and usually two others, all chosen from non-divine spell lists. The exact number of spells a deity grants can vary—a magic-focused deity might grant one spell per level—though this shouldn't exceed one spell per level.

COSMOLOGY

An enduring curiosity among many cultures is to ask what wonders lie beyond the night sky. Does anyone gaze back from the moon above? What realms do the gods call home, and what is it like to walk in their divine presence? Is the mortal world at the center of the universe, or is all life utterly insignificant? Spiritual ponderings like these are central to belief systems across the globe. As a world builder, you get to answer those enduring questions by designing the multiverse in all its inexplicable grandeur. The following are some aspects of your cosmology you might consider, but as you decide these, you should also consider how many of these details are known in your world—and by whom.

THE UNIVERSE

The reality in which mortals live out their short existence is known to sages and scholars by many names—the universe, the Material Plane, or the mortal realm, among others. The structure of the physical universe might follow any of the following models, or it might be something completely different.

Vast: The universe is an unimaginably sparse void of infinite space, littered with stars, planets, and various bits of detritus.

Limited: The physical universe in your campaign world may be smaller in scope yet far more fanciful. For example, in Hinduism, the cosmos is supported on the backs of four elephants, themselves standing upon the shell of a world-sized tortoise, whereas Norse cosmology describes nine worlds connected by an immense ash tree.

Bizarre: Sometimes the universe is more complex than the previous two categories, or possibly nested within multiple realities. What if the universe the PCs first know is in fact a magical or mechanical simulation of such complexity that its inhabitants are unaware that they themselves exist as an artificial consciousness?

COMPOSITION OF OUTER SPACE

The spaces between the stars can also affect the stories told in that world.

Vacuum: In conventional astronomy, outer space is an immense void existing in a near-perfect vacuum. In some settings—including the Age of Lost Omens, where it is known as the Dark Tapestry—the trackless firmament between the stars is an ominous expanse home only to terrible beings of incomprehensible malice.

Endless Sky: What if the blue sky overhead extended outward forever? One need only fly high enough and far enough to reach another world.

Celestial Spheres: The ancient Greeks posited that planets, stars, and more were embedded like jewels within celestial orbs of quintessence nested within one another.

SOLAR SYSTEM

What is the shape and structure of the solar system containing your game world?

Heliocentric: Physics dictate that all planets in a system orbit the sun.

Geocentric: What if your game world is in fact the center of the star system, or perhaps even the center of the known universe?

Dyson Sphere: Perhaps a solar system has been enclosed in an artificial structure designed to harness the power of the sun.

PLANETS AND MOONS

In antiquity, astronomers noticed that some of the twinkling lights in the night sky moved differently than the others. In time, these celestial wanderers would come to be known as planets, many with their own complement of orbiting moons. Are there other planets orbiting your world's sun? Are they terrestrial, gas giants, or something less common? How many moons are there? The characters may never venture there, but celestial bodies can have a strong influence on a culture and help you describe your world in an evocative and distinctive way.

THE MULTIVERSE

In Pathfinder, the physical universe of your world is one plane within a much broader multiverse. The Planes, on page 136, details how planes work and the multiverse of the Age of Lost Omens, but you can fit planes to your story and world, or even build a new multiverse from scratch! Perhaps there are only two planes beyond the material universe, diametrically opposed and fighting over mortal souls, or the multiverse consists only of a series of infinite alternate realities. The options are truly infinite, limited only by your imagination and the story you want to tell.



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NATIONS

From the smallest of city-states to a continent-spanning empire, nations define the political landscape of a setting and inform local culture and traditions. Knowing the details of a nation can help you as a Game Master, whether your game revolves around international disputes or you simply need to know what languages the common people are likely to speak.

Nations vary tremendously, from massive empires to isolated island realms, and their characteristics can give flavor and depth to your story and the PCs' adventures. An encounter in shadowy Nidal, where allegiance to Zon-Kuthon has literally blocked the sun from the sky, is going to have a very different tone than one in sun-drenched Thuvia. A nation working to overcome generations of xenophobia, like Kyonin, might have a different reaction to adventurers than a long-established empire like Taldor. A journey into a new nation can introduce the heroes to a new people (if the party visits the hobgoblin nation of Oprak), a new philosophy (such as the materialistic Prophecies of Kalistrade in Druma), or a new foe (as visitors to the undead-ridden Gravelands will certainly learn).

Nations can also provide adventuring inspiration and hooks. When the heroes are caught in the crossfire between two nations in conflict, national concerns become their own. Learning more about a nation's history or practices might lead to a great finding—or a loathsome practice the characters want to eradicate. A party might get involved in the political machinations of a nation's elite power mongers, or they might fall out of favor and find themselves on the run from the law!

Nations also influence a character's story on a personal level. A nation can suggest a character's ancestry, inform the languages they speak, and influence their choice of deity. As a GM, the relationship between a character and a nation can provide opportunities to better hook that character into your campaign. Has the character always lived there, or have they emigrated from elsewhere—and why? A character who fled due to political persecution might have long-standing enemies, while a hero who left due to ideological differences might have friends and family who seek to return them to the fold.

NATION STAT BLOCK

The stat block for a nation presents the core information about a nation in a simple, streamlined format.

NATION NAME

NATION

ALIGNMENT OTHER TRAITS

As with any stat block, a nation has a list of traits that convey its properties at a glance. The most significant of these is the nation's alignment trait, which indicates the alignment of the nation and its government as a whole. This doesn't necessarily reflect the alignment of its people, though—a nation is rarely monolithic, and the alignments of its people may differ drastically from those of the nation as a whole.

Any other traits in the nation stat block reflect overarching characteristics about that nation. For example, the elven nation of Kyonin has the elf trait, indicating that it was created by and remains almost exclusively populated by elves. Similarly, a nation with an extremely particular focus might have a trait to represent that, such as Galt, which has the revolutionary trait.

Following the traits is a brief summary of the nation.

Government This names the formal government and describes the nation's governmental structure, such as a hereditary monarchy, an elected council, or a theocratic dictatorship.

Capital This is the established seat of the nation's government, with the city's population in parentheses.

Population The predominant ancestries of the nation are listed here, ordered from most to least common.

Languages The languages commonly spoken in the nation appear here, listed alphabetically.

Religions This lists the religions and philosophies commonly practiced in the nation. If a nation has a state religion, this is indicated in parentheses following that religion. If a nation has prohibited any religions, those are listed in a Prohibited entry following the common religions.

Other Characteristics A nation might have distinctive features that set it apart from other nations, such as the predominance of firearms in Alkenstar. Each such feature is detailed in this entry, though a nation rarely has more than one or two of these entries, and many don't have any.

Primary Exports This lists the nation's primary exports, such as raw materials, finished goods, services, and other resources. If the nation has no exports of note, this entry is omitted.

Primary Imports Much like primary exports, this entry details the resources commonly imported by the nation. Like exports, if the nation has no imports of note, this entry is omitted.

Allies This entry lists other nations, and occasionally large organizations, allied with the nation. It is omitted for nations with no significant relationships.

Enemies Other nations (and sometimes organizations) that oppose the nation appear here. This entry is omitted for nations with no enemies to speak of.

Factions Any significant organizations or factions operating within the nation are listed in this entry.

Threats This entry lists various threats the nation faces, such as aggression from neighboring nations, natural disasters, economic instability, magical anomalies, and so on.

Significant NPCs The final section of the nation's stat block presents the most significant NPCs of that nation, including its ruler. These may not be the most powerful or influential individuals in the nation, and instead are those most likely to be known by people within and outside of the nation.



NATIONS OF LOST OMENS

Presented below are stat blocks for two nations from the Lost Omens Campaign Setting. You can use these as examples when building your own nation stat blocks.

ANDORAN

NATION

NG

Fledgling democracy in pursuit of freedom for all.

Government The People's Council (parliamentary democracy)

Capital Almas (76,600)

Population humans (Taldan), halflings, kobolds, dwarves

Languages Common

Religions Abadar, Cayden Cailean, Erastil, Iomedae, Shelyn

Primary Exports ancient treasures and artifacts, financial credit, lumber, minerals

Enemies autocratic governments concerned about potential domestic revolts, Cheliah, Katapesh, slavers

Factions Bellflower Network, Eagle Knights, Lumber Consortium

Threats rising aggression from Cheliah, retaliation from slavers, corruption among elected officials

Andira Marusek (LG female human warrior) Supreme Elect of the Executive Office and mayor of Almas

Reginald Cormoth (LG male human commander) Eagle Knight Commander General

Felandriel Morgethai (CG female elf wizard) Almas University provost

RAHADOU

NATION

LN

Desert nation unified by a humanistic worldview and rejection of religion.

Government Council of Elders (representative council)

Capital Azir (72,370)

Population humans (Garundi, Mauxi)

Languages Common, Osiriani

Religions Laws of Mortality; **Prohibited** all divine religions

Irreligious All worship of deities is prohibited by Rahadoumi law. Religious symbols and items are confiscated and proselytization incurs a heavy fine. Rahadoumi citizens perform healing through only mundane means or non-divine magic.

Primary Exports base metals, fine cloth, gemstones, herbal remedies, mechanical innovations, produce, salt, tools

Primary Imports lumber, pesh

Enemies pirates of the Shackles, Red Mantis, religious groups

Factions Aspis Consortium, Pure Legion

Threats conflict among neighboring nations, desert-dwelling monsters, disease, rapidly accelerating desertification

Malduoni (LN male human politician) Keeper of the First Law, elected by the Council of Elders

Kassi Aziril (NG female human doctor) "Mother of Modern Medicine," renowned medical researcher and philanthropist

Salim Ghadafar (LN male human inquisitor) former Pure Legion captain forced into Pharamasma's service



SETTLEMENTS

Adventures have to start somewhere, and everyone needs some semblance of a home. Settlements are where characters can rest, recharge, retrain, and dedicate themselves to other downtime activities, all in relative peace. But settlements can also hold their own intrigues and dangers, providing adventure opportunities of their own.

For some players, a settlement may be nothing more than a convenient place to purchase gear and sell loot. For others, a settlement might be a beloved home they're willing to risk everything to protect. And sometimes, an entire campaign takes place entirely within the walls of a single city.

SETTLEMENTS IN A GAME

Given the variety of roles a settlement can play in an adventure, a Game Master should have a firm understanding of how they work in the game and how to best use them. Virtually every settlement uses the rules for urban environments presented starting on page 514 of the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*. Those rules are primarily intended for encounter mode, however, and so the following guidance can help you best use a settlement in the broader narrative of your game.

SETTLEMENT ADVENTURES

Designing adventures in a settlement generally follows the guidelines presented in Adventure Design on page 40. However, a settlement's greater population density also allows for a number of adventure styles and elements that aren't as common beyond the city walls.

Social encounters are one of the most common interactions within a settlement, starting with the guards at the city gates all the way to an audience with the queen. The influence and reputation subsystems (pages 151 and 164, respectively) can facilitate these interactions in a more structured way. Chase scenes, using the rules starting on page 156, are an iconic component of a settlement adventure, especially in a larger city, where dense buildings and a variety of structures make for an exciting series of obstacles. A settlement is also an ideal place for a party to conduct an infiltration (page 160). Since most libraries, archives, and similar repositories of information are located within settlements, you might make use of the research rules (page 154). Ambitious characters might want to build up their own organizations using the leadership subsystem (page 168).

MODES OF PLAY

Just like in other adventure locations, all three modes of play can happen in settlements. Since a settlement presents far more opportunities for noncombat activities than most other environments, characters likely spend most of their time in exploration mode. Downtime almost exclusively takes place within a settlement.

MARKETPLACES

Where there are people, there is commerce. The Buying and Selling section on page 24 provides several sets of guidelines for handling commerce in your game, but it can also be helpful to have a sense of what items and economic power a given settlement has on its own merits.

In a given settlement, a character can usually purchase any common item (including formulas, alchemical items, and magic items) that is of the same or lower level than the settlement's. Usually, fewer of the highest-level items are available—you can use Table 10–9: Party Treasure by Level on page 509 of the *Core Rulebook* as a guideline for how many of the highest-level items might be available, using the Permanent Items and Consumables entries for a level 1 lower than the settlement's actual level. Inhabitants of a settlement can usually purchase items from PCs as long as those items are the same or lower level than the settlement, with limitations on higher-level items similar to those available for sale. If a settlement's population is significantly smaller than its level would suggest, its ability to provide and purchase items may be more limited.

If a character's level is higher than the settlement's, that character can usually use their own influence and leverage to acquire higher-level items, as they convince shops to place specialty orders or artisans to craft custom goods, though it might take a bit of time for such orders to be fulfilled.

Spellcasting services are available in many settlements. Barring a powerful spellcasting NPC in the city with whom the party could negotiate for services, a character can find someone to cast common spells up to a level that could be cast by an NPC of the settlement's level. For example, a character in a 9th-level city can typically find and pay someone to cast a 5th-level common spell—the highest spell available to a 9th-level spellcaster.

Some settlements have access to uncommon items, formulas, and spells. If a settlement could reasonably be considered to meet the Access entry for an item or spell, that item or spell is available just like any common item. For example, the dwarven settlement of Kraggodan has plenty of dwarf weapons available.

POWER STRUCTURES

Outside of city limits, adventurers spend much of their time operating on their own terms, accountable only to their own moral code. But in a settlement, the heroes become part of a larger system with its own codified laws, procedures, and enforcement. The details of a settlement's power structures shape the party's interactions within that settlement.



GOVERNMENT

The government of a settlement often reflects the nature of that settlement. A lawful, militaristic city likely has a hierarchical government with a single figure at the top, a crossroads market town might be under the control of its wealthiest merchant families, and a farming community might simply look to the oldest residents for leadership as necessary.

That said, the lawful and publicly recognized ruler of a settlement isn't always the one calling the shots. They may merely be a puppet to a secret entity that silently pulls the strings from the shadows. Some settlements are ruled by hidden cabals, from strange religious sects to thieves' guilds. A settlement might be swayed by politically powerful residents, such as an occult vizier or a political savvy high priest. In some cases, the legitimate authority may seem to govern but has actually been replaced by a faceless stalker, a devil in disguise, or another powerful shapechanger.

LEGAL CODES

Most civilizations agree that laws are necessary to ensure a functioning society. The specific laws range from one settlement to another, and they might be as simple as a prohibition against murder and theft to exceptionally convoluted regulatory schemes dictating everything from clothing details to available confections. How well known

these laws are can further flavor a party's interactions with that settlement, as it's likely easier to navigate a well-documented system than one in which the rules are learned only through experience and word of mouth.

Much like a government, the legal codes reflect the settlement's alignment and overall nature. Generally speaking, a more lawful settlement is likely to have more complex laws, and a more lax locale to have fewer and simpler laws.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Most settlements have systems in place to enforce their laws. In a small village, the residents might just police themselves, holding one another accountable to their shared values. Towns and larger settlements usually have some system of guards, whether that's a post filled by a rotation of volunteers or a city guard of professionals paid by the city's government to maintain order. Most settlements have some way of dealing with criminals, from fines to public stocks to prison cells, as well as individuals responsible for meting out those sentences.

ORGANIZATIONS, CHURCHES, AND FACTIONS

The government isn't the only influential factor in a settlement. Prestigious organizations, prominent churches, and specialized factions all wield power as well, often in conflict with the official government or one another.



COMMON NPCs

Several categories of NPCs are quite common in settlements, if not exclusive to them. The following sections from the NPC Gallery of this book provide statistics and additional useful information for running settlements.

- **Courtiers** (page 206) The upper crust of society is most common in larger settlements.
- **Magistrates** (page 224) These public officials create and implement the law.
- **Officers** (page 232) Officers are responsible for enforcing the law in a settlement.
- **Performers** (page 236) Performers are most common in settlements, where there are large audiences.
- **Publicans** (page 238) Nearly every settlement has at least one gathering place and its regulars.
- **Scholars** (page 240) Most repositories of lore are located within settlements.
- **Tradespeople** (page 244) Tradespeople provide the skilled labor that keeps a town supplied and running.

Religious congregations usually wield significant power in communities where faith is strong. A wizard, sorcerer, or bard of even moderate magical talent would be a rare and influential member of society in a small settlement. An organization can wield overt influence over the community where they're based, or subtle control, as the Pathfinder Society does in Absalom. Other notable factions may include noble houses, wealthy merchants, innkeepers, and retired soldiers and adventurers.

CORRUPTION

In any settlement, it's possible for officials to put their own interests before those of the people they serve. Corruption might be as simple as a clerk willing to accept a bribe to expedite some paperwork, or it might be as sinister as selling civilians into slavery.

SETTLEMENT STAT BLOCK

A settlement's stat block consolidates the basic information about a settlement into a centralized format.

SETTLEMENT NAME

SETTLEMENT (LEVEL)

ALIGNMENT TYPE OTHER TRAITS

The first elements of a settlement stat block are its name and level. A settlement's level represents its relative size and economic capacity, as well as roughly corresponding to the maximum level of NPC that can be found there, not counting significant NPCs listed below. In general, any common items with a level no higher than the settlement's level are available for purchase (though a character of a higher level can usually ferret out or custom order higher-level items). In addition, the settlement's level is used to help determine the maximum possible task level that could become available there to Earn Income (*Core Rulebook* 504). Both these are simply guidelines, however, and a GM should make exceptions at their discretion.

Following the settlement's heading are its traits. The first of these is the trait representing the settlement's alignment. This trait represents the alignment of the settlement's government and overall society, and while it may indicate a trend, it doesn't dictate the alignment of every individual citizen. After the alignment trait is the trait for the type of settlement: village, town, city, or metropolis. This trait generally reflects the size of the settlement, but it also tends to correlate to a settlement's level. A village is usually level 0–1, a town level 2–4, a city level 5–7, and a metropolis 8 or above, though the presence of many higher-level or wealthy residents could easily skew the level of a village, town, or city upwards.

A settlement might have other traits in addition to its alignment and type traits. For example, the dwarven sky citadel of Kraggodan has the dwarf trait, since it was built and is predominantly occupied by dwarves. The city of Lepidstadt in Ustalav has the academic trait, due to its focus around the prestigious University of Lepidstadt.

Following the settlement's traits is a simple sentence that provides a short description of the settlement and its role in the story or region.

Government This entry describes the settlement's governing entity, such as a mayor, the town elder, an elected council, and so on.

Population The settlement's total population is listed here, followed by a breakdown of the population by ancestry in parentheses.

Languages The languages commonly spoken in the settlement are listed here, ordered alphabetically.

Religions This entry lists the religions and philosophies commonly practiced in the settlement. If the settlement has an official religion, that is indicated in parenthesis. If the settlement has prohibited any religions or philosophies, those are listed in a Prohibited entry following the Religions entry.

Threats This entry lists the major threats facing the settlement, such as ongoing drought or famine, political uprisings, criminal activity, and the like.

Other Characteristics A settlement might have distinctive features that affect its residents or visitors entering the city, such as a particular trade that makes certain items more available.

Significant NPCs The final section of the settlement stat block presents the most significant NPCs of that settlement. This usually includes the settlement's official leader, if it's a single person. It also includes other movers and shakers, local celebrities, and persons of particular interest to adventurers.

SAMPLE SETTLEMENT ABILITIES

Here are some common settlement abilities you can use to customize a settlement of your own creation.

Artists' Haven: Residents of this city have a deep appreciation for fine art. It's easier to find higher-level tasks involving Performance or art, as well as buyers willing to pay more for art objects.

City of Artisans: Items of up to 4 levels higher are available from a particular category the settlement is famous for, such as armor and weapons.

Magical Academy: The settlement prides itself on teaching magic, and its residents are skilled at teaching others. Choose a magical tradition or traditions suitable to your settlement. When a PC pays an NPC to teach them a new spell of that tradition in the settlement, the NPC assists the process and provides an additional +2 circumstance bonus to the check to Learn the Spell.

Religious Bias: This settlement has a strong affiliation with a particular religion. Anyone who is visibly a worshipper of that deity gains a +1 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy checks to Make an Impression, Request, and Gather Information. Characters who visibly worship one of that deity's foes take a -1 circumstance penalty to the same actions.

Scholarly: An abundance of public libraries or other accessible places of learning within this settlement means that with 1d4 hours, a character can access a scholarly journal on a relevant common subject (*Core Rulebook* 291) before attempting to Recall Knowledge.

CHANGING A SETTLEMENT

Sometimes the characters spend a long period of time in a single settlement. Perhaps it's their home base, where they spend their downtime between adventures, or perhaps the entire adventure takes place there. In these cases, you might find you need to update your settlement stat block as it changes over time.

Several elements of the settlement stat block are simple to update; you change the population as it grows or shrinks, and you change the leaders on your stat block as different people move between those positions. But you also might make changes that reflect the results of the PCs' adventures. If the heroes eliminated a major threat facing the settlement, you should remove that threat from the stat block—but if they drew the wrath of a new foe in doing so, you might add that new threat! You can also update the stat block's abilities, should the PCs' actions have that large an influence on the city. For example, if the party (using the leadership subsystem on page 168) built up a wizard school focused on crafting magical items, you might add an ability to the settlement stat block that increased the availability of magic items in the settlement's markets.



SETTLEMENTS OF LOST OMENS

PORT PERIL

SETTLEMENT 11

CN METROPOLIS

Pirate city and black-market capital of the Shackles.

Government Hurricane Queen (overlord)

Population 43,270 (65% humans, 10% half-elves, 8% half-orcs, 5% gnomes, 5% halflings, 7% other)

Languages Common, Kelish, Osiriani

Religions Besmara, Cayden Cailean, Gozreh

Threats anti-pirate policing from the Inner Sea region, opposing pirate forces, supernatural storms from the Eye of Abendego

Pirate Town Port Peril thrives on black-market and stolen goods. Items that might be difficult to acquire or dispose of in other settlements due to legality can be purchased and sold more easily in Port Peril. NPCs begin with an attitude one step worse than usual toward characters openly displaying insignia of law-enforcement agencies, religious iconography of lawful deities, or affiliation with a lawful nation.

Pherias Jakar (CN female elf troubadour) merchant master and joint overseer of Port Peril

Sabas Odabio (LN male human administrator) accountant and joint overseer of Port Peril

Tessa Fairwind (CN female half-elf pirate lord) Hurricane Queen of the Shackles

Tsojmin Kreidoros (LE male dwarf wizard) harbormaster and joint overseer of Port Peril

OTARI

SETTLEMENT 4

N TOWN

Diverse lumber town and trade port with a storied past and a fair share of sinister secrets.

Government Mayor (elected leader)

Population 1,240 (60% humans, 8% halflings, 7% half-elves, 6% elves, 5% dwarves, 5% gnomes, 3% half-orcs, 2% goblins, 4% other)

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnomish, Halfling

Religions Cayden Cailean, Erastil, Gozreh, Nethys, Sarenrae

Threats aberrant horrors, eerie hauntings, kobolds, smugglers

Trinket Trade Otari has a long tradition of catering to adventurers, and consumable items of up to level 10 can be purchased in its markets and shops.

Lardus Longsaddle (CN male human soldier) foul-mouthed and short-tempered captain of the town guard

Oseph Menhemes (N male human mayor) current mayor of Otari, patriarch of one of three local lumber companies

Vandy Banderdash (NG female halfling cleric) chatty priestess of Sarenrae and unusually knowledgeable town historian

Wrin Sivinxi (CG female tiefling merchant) eccentric occult items dealer, artisan, and collector of stories and rumors

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THE PLANES

Beyond the world of Golarion and the void of space beyond it lie the vast planes of existence referred to as the Great Beyond. Often alien and dangerous, most of these planes embody some foundational aspect of reality—one of the chief elements that make up the rest of the multiverse, a kind of fundamental energy, or an alignment. Each plane is a reality unto itself, with its own laws of existence and its own native inhabitants who might visit, grant benefits to residents of, or cause havoc on the face of Golarion.

Exploring the planes offers several opportunities for high adventure, as well chances to discover the secrets of creation.

PLANAR TRAITS

Each plane, dimension, and demiplane has its own properties and attributes. Planar traits can be broken down into six categories: alignment, scope, gravity, time, morphic, and planar essence. Combined, those traits describe the laws and makeup of the plane. These appear in the plane's traits entry, though any trait that matches the Material Plane (described in the Normal entry in each section below) is omitted.

ENHANCED AND IMPEDED MAGIC

Some planes enhance certain magic and impede opposing effects. A plane that enhances a particular type of magic grants anyone Casting a Spell with that trait a +1 circumstance bonus to their spell DC or spell attack roll with that spell. Impeded magic means a character who Casts a Spell or Activates an Item with the specified trait must succeed at a DC 6 flat check or lose the spell or activation.

ALIGNMENT TRAIT

Certain planes, particularly in the Outer Sphere, are attuned to an alignment. Most inhabitants share that alignment—even powerful creatures such as deities. Planes with the neutral alignment trait are more often a mix of alignments than strongly neutral, and planes with no alignment affinity simply don't have an alignment trait, rather than being neutral. Alignments are given as an abbreviation (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 345), which appears first in the plane's list of traits.

Spells that share any of the plane's alignment traits are enhanced, and those with opposing traits are impeded. For instance, in the chaotic evil Abyss, chaotic and evil spells are enhanced, and lawful and good spells are impeded.

SCOPE TRAIT

Most planes are immeasurable, so immense they are impossible to quantify. Which immeasurable planes, if any, are infinite is a subject of debate among philosophers and scholars alike. Since so many planes are immeasurable, those planes omit a scope trait. Otherwise, the plane likely has either the finite or unbounded trait.

Finite: Finite planes consist of a limited amount of space.

Immeasurable: Immeasurable planes are immeasurably large, perhaps infinite.

Unbounded: Unbounded planes loop back on themselves when a creature reaches the plane's "edge."

GRAVITY TRAITS

Many planes have unusual gravity.

Normal: Bodies of great mass are the centers of gravity, and objects fall toward those centers with a measured amount of force relative to the size of the body.

High Gravity: As in normal gravity, bodies of great mass act as centers of gravity, but the force relative to the size of the body is greater than on the Material Plane. The Bulk of all creatures and objects is doubled, meaning creatures acclimated to normal gravity can carry only half as much. Creatures used to normal gravity move at half Speed and can jump only half as high and far. Physical ranged attacks are impossible beyond the third range increment (instead of the sixth). Creatures that fall in high gravity take bludgeoning damage equal to the distance they fell.

Low Gravity: As in normal gravity, bodies of great mass act as centers of gravity, but the force relative to the size of the body is less than on the Material Plane. The Bulk of all creatures and objects is halved, meaning creatures acclimated to normal gravity can carry twice as much and jump twice as high and far. Physical ranged attacks are possible up to the twelfth range increment (instead of the sixth). Creatures that fall in low gravity take no damage for the first 10 feet of a fall, and then take bludgeoning damage equal to a quarter of the remaining distance it fell.

Microgravity: There is little to no gravity on this plane. Creatures float in space unless they can push off a surface or use some force to propel themselves throughout the plane.

Strange Gravity: All bodies of mass are centers of gravity with roughly the same force. A creature can stand on any solid objects that is as large as or larger than itself.

Subjective Gravity: All bodies of mass can be centers of gravity with the same force, but only if a non-mindless creature wills it. Unattended items, objects, and mindless creatures treat the plane as having microgravity. Creatures on a plane with subjective gravity can move normally along a solid surface by imagining "down" near their feet. Designating this downward direction is a free action that has the concentration trait. If suspended in midair, a creature can replicate flight by choosing a "down" direction and falling in that direction, moving up to their Speed or fly Speed. This pseudo-flight uses the Fly action.

TIME TRAITS

Time flows differently on many planes.

Normal: Time passes the same way it does on the Material Plane. One hour on a plane with normal time equals 1 hour on the Material Plane.

Erratic: Time slows down and speeds up, so an individual may lose or gain time as they move between planes. When a creature moves from a plane with erratic time to one with normal time, roll a DC 11 flat check. Creatures that leave an erratic time plane together share the same result.

Success Time passed normally on the erratic time plane.

Failure For each hour spent on the erratic time plane, 1 day passed on the normal time plane.

Critical Failure For each round spent on the erratic time plane, 1 day passed on the normal time plane.

Flowing: The flow of time is consistently faster or slower. A creature may travel to one of these planes, spend a year there, and find that only an hour passed on the Material Plane; alternatively, they might spend a minute on this plane and find out an hour passed on the Material Plane.

Timeless: Time still passes, but the effects of time are diminished. Creatures on these planes don't feel hunger, thirst, or the effects of aging or natural healing. The effects of poison, diseases, and other kinds of healing may also be diminished on certain timeless planes. Spell energy and other effects still dissipate, so the durations of spells and other effects function as normal. The danger of this trait is that when a creature leaves a timeless plane and enters a plane with another time trait, the effects of hunger, thirst, aging, and other effects slowed or arrested by the timeless trait occur retroactively in the instant of transition, possibly causing the creature to immediately starve or die of old age.

MORPHIC TRAITS

This trait describes how easily the physical nature of the plane can be changed. The Material Plane is the norm, but other planes can warp through the plane's own sentient designs or be manipulated by extremely powerful creatures.

Normal: Objects remain where they are (and what they are) unless affected by physical force or magic. Creatures can change the immediate environment as a result of tangible effort, such as by digging a hole.

Metamorphic: Things change by means other than physical force or magic. Sometimes spells have morphic effects. Other times, the plane's nature is under the control of a deity or power, or the plane simply changes at random.

Sentient: The plane changes based on its own whims.

Static: Visitors can't affect living residents of the plane or objects the denizens carry in any way. Any spells that would affect those on the plane have no effect unless the static trait is somehow removed or suppressed.

PLANAR ESSENCE TRAITS

Planar essence traits describe a plane's fundamental nature. For example, many of the Inner Sphere's planes are infused with an element or energy, each of which affects

magic on those planes, and the Shadow Plane is awash with shadow. Outer Planes are fundamentally made up of quintessence, a philosophically aligned material with infinite potential for shape and state that conforms to powerful and prevailing beliefs.

Air: Planes with this trait consist mostly of open spaces and air of various levels of turbulence, though they also contain rare islands of floating stone and other elements and energies. Air planes usually have breathable atmospheres, though they may include clouds of acidic or toxic gas. Air magic is enhanced, and earth magic is impeded. Earth creatures often find themselves at a disadvantage within air planes, which tend to at least make them uncomfortable, as there is little solid ground for them to gain their bearings.

Earth: These planes are mostly solid. Travelers arriving upon an earth plane risk suffocation if they don't reach a cavern or some other air pocket within the plane's solid matter. Creatures who can't burrow are entombed in the plane's substance and must attempt to dig their way toward an air pocket. Earth magic is enhanced, and air magic is impeded. Air creatures are ill at ease, as they rarely have the space to move freely through even the most lofty warrens.

Fire: Planes with this trait are composed of flames that continually burn with no fuel source. Fire planes are extremely hostile to non-fire creatures.

Unprotected wood, paper, cloth, and other flammable materials catch fire almost immediately, and creatures wearing unprotected flammable clothing catch fire, typically taking 1d6 persistent fire damage. Extraplanar creatures take moderate environmental fire damage at the end of each round (sometimes minor environmental damage in safer areas, or major or massive damage in even more fiery areas). Fire magic is enhanced, and cold and water magic are impeded. Water creatures are extremely uncomfortable on a fire plane, and any natural resistance they have against fire doesn't function against this environmental fire damage.

Water: These planes are mostly liquid. Visitors who can't breathe water or reach an air pocket likely drown. Water magic is enhanced, and fire magic is impeded. Creatures with a weakness to water take damage equal to double their weakness at the end of each round.

Negative: Planes with this trait are vast, empty reaches that suck the life from the living. They tend to be lonely, haunted planes, drained of color and filled with winds carrying the moans of those who died within them. At the end of each round, a living creature takes at least minor negative environmental damage. In the strongest areas of a negative plane, they could take moderate or even major negative damage at the end of each round. This damage has the death trait, and if a living creature is reduced to 0 Hit Points by this negative damage and killed, it crumbles into ash and can become a wraith (*Bestiary* 335). Negative magic is enhanced, and positive magic is impeded.

Positive: These planes are awash with life energy. Colors are brighter, fires are hotter, noises are louder, and sensations are more intense. At the end of each round, an

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undead creature takes at least minor positive environmental damage. In the strongest areas of a positive plane, they could take moderate or even major positive damage at the end of each round. While this might seem safe for living creatures, positive planes present a different danger. Living creatures regain an amount of HP each round equal to the environmental damage undead take in the same area. If this would bring the living creature above their maximum HP, any excess becomes temporary HP. Unlike normal, these temporary HP combine with each other, and they last until the creature leaves the plane. If a creature's temporary HP from a positive plane ever exceeds its maximum HP, it explodes in a burst of overloaded positive energy, spreading across the area to birth new souls. Positive magic is enhanced, and negative magic is impeded.

Shadow: Planes with this trait are umbral with murky light. On a shadow plane, the radius of all light from light sources and the areas of light spells are halved. Darkness and shadow magic are enhanced, and light magic is impeded.

PLANAR STAT BLOCKS

Each of the planes listed in the following pages includes a short stat block of key information. The plane's type—whether it is a plane, dimension, or demiplane—appears in the stat block's heading, followed by the traits that define that plane. The following entries also provide important information about each plane.

Category: This indicates whether the plane is an Inner Plane, Outer Plane, Transitive Plane, or dimension.

Divinities: A list of all of the deities, demigods, and other powers that call this realm their home.

Native Inhabitants: A sample of typical inhabitants of the plane. Also listed are the plane's petitioners, the souls of dead mortals who have been judged and sent on to whichever plane reflects the life they led. More information on petitioners can be found in *Pathfinder Bestiary 2*.

INNER SPHERE PLANES

The planes of the Inner Sphere form the heart of the cosmos. They are the home of mortal life, the focus of divine attention, the source of mortal souls, and the origin point of the great cycle of quintessence that fuels the motions and stability of reality itself. Arranged in a nested series of shells, like layers of an onion, the planes of the Inner Sphere include, from outer to inner: the Elemental Planes of Fire, Earth, Water, and Air; the universe of the Material Plane; and at the very core of this cosmological ensemble, the raw forces of creation and destruction of the Positive and Negative Energy Planes.

MATERIAL PLANE

PLANE

N

Category Inner Plane

Divinities Elder Mythos pantheon, Gozreh

Native Inhabitants dwarves, elves, halflings, humans, gnomes, goblins, and countless other ancestries

The Material Plane is the prosaic universe and the home of mortal life. Innumerable galaxies play host to countless stars and their planets, each housing unique settings for any campaign, with Golarion as the classic example. Other worlds of note like Castrovel, Akiton, and Eox exist within Golarion's own solar system, and then beyond this, orbiting other distant stars or in other galaxies still, worlds such as Androffa, Carcosa, and even Earth swirl within the Material Plane's vast and silent void.

Yet for all the profound wonder and diversity of life that the Material Plane houses, in the dark places between the stars, known as the Dark Tapestry, lurk the inimical gods known as the Outer Gods and Great Old Ones, the sinister collective known as the Dominion of the Black.

The Material Plane serves as the destination for pre-incarnate souls, each mortal life born, living, and dying before sending its spirit toward the planes of the Outer Sphere for judgment. The Material Plane is likewise the focus of the gods, each of whom is invested in fostering their own particular portfolio among mortal worshippers and the material world at large.

NEGATIVE ENERGY PLANE

PLANE

N NEGATIVE SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY UNBOUNDED

Category Inner Plane

Divinities none

Native Inhabitants sceaduinars, wraiths, and other undead

The vast void of the Negative Energy Plane is a merciless, lightless expanse of manifest destruction and nothingness. Sapping and consuming the life force of any living creature exposed to its energies, it corrodes and disintegrates material objects to rubble, then dust, and then nothing at all. Yet the Void contains its own form of anti-life. At their densest concentration, the plane's energies aggregate into bizarre, black crystalline snowflake structures, and these irregularities spontaneously generate the plane's resident sceaduinars. Dwelling in beautiful, deadly cities drifting in the vacuous darkness, these so-called void raptors are incapable of true creation and blame this flaw on some ancient betrayal by their rivals on the Positive Energy Plane. Sceaduinars react violently not only toward creatures sustained by positive energy, but also toward undead, whom they view as unnatural parasites unworthy of their plane's energies.

The black depths also swarm with undead, creatures doomed to a mockery of life by the interaction of their souls with the plane's entropic energy. Yet for all the horrors posed by the plane's environment, inhabitants, and its undead victims, its depths nevertheless hide rare refuges for planar travelers. Malika's Keep offers shelter, for a price, to those willing to bargain with its titular lich master, while elsewhere the depths hide entire lost worlds such as Fallen Duromak, and deadly mysteries like the planet-sized, undead-entrapping glass sphere, Eternity's Doorstep.

POSITIVE ENERGY PLANE

PLANE

N POSITIVE SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY UNBOUNDED

Category Inner Plane

Divinities none

Native Inhabitants jyoti, petitioners (enlightened)

Known as Creation's Forge, the Positive Energy Plane is at once the source of life-sustaining positive energy, the origin of all pre-incarnate mortal souls, and paradoxically the most innately hostile of all of the planes. While positive energy is deadly to undead and beneficial to living beings, such is the intensity of the plane that unmitigated exposure ultimately incinerates any extraplanar beings without sufficient magical protection. The most apt comparison for the plane's interior is that of the heart of a burning star, and indeed the stars of the Material Plane each house natural portals to the Positive Energy Plane within their glowing, potent cores to foster the movement of pre-incarnate souls in their first steps in the great cycle of life and death.

Brilliant and blinding, the plane's interior is sparsely populated, and the resident phoenix-kin jyoti are intensely xenophobic. Dwelling in glimmering, radiant crystalline cities such as Arudrellisiir, they view themselves as gardeners and guardians of souls spawned from their realm's burning quintessence. Intensely distrustful of gods and their servitors, jyoti can nonetheless be bargained with, and they have frequently taken into their custodianship any number of artifacts and imprisoned beings considered too dangerous to house on any other plane.

PLANE OF AIR

PLANE

N AIR SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY

Category Inner Plane

Divinities elemental lords of air

Native Inhabitants air elementals, cloud dragons, djinn, petitioners (air pneuma)

The Plane of Air, innermost of the Elemental Planes, is a vast realm of wind, storms, and skies. Illuminated by great artificial globes of flame and distant starlight from the material universe, the plane is populated by air elementals, dragons, mephits, and a great empire of djinn. Though mostly clouds and empty skies, the plane is not entirely bereft of solid ground, including rock and ice created by the residents or dragged into their realm from the distant Plane of Earth or neighboring Plane of Water, and bizarre, drifting spheres of brass and iron. While the former are aggressively fought over, most housing the cities of the vast djinn empire, the latter are almost entirely abandoned and shunned by the plane's inhabitants, who believe them cursed, entrapping forgotten, ancient enemies who once ravaged the plane.

The djinn rule from their shining capital city of Armun Kelisk, built atop a series of seven floating islands. Their vast trade network crisscrosses the skies and ventures to other planes, kept aloft by natural and magical flight, including great airships that allow visitors to quickly and safely traverse the skies. The djinn are welcoming and gracious hosts to extraplanar travelers and adventurers, a perspective not shared by Hshurha the Duchess of All Winds, the evil elemental lord of air.

PLANE OF EARTH

PLANE

N EARTH

Category Inner Plane

Divinities elemental lords of earth, Nivi Rhombodazzle

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Native Inhabitants crystal dragons, earth elementals, petitioners (earth pneuma), shaitans

A great and rocky shell situated between the Plane of Fire and Plane of Water, the Eternal Delve hosts a unique and varied ecology of creatures at home in its rocky depths. Far from an endless, solid expanse, the Plane of Earth is riddled with great caverns and cave systems, excavated artificial vaults, vast crystalline geodes, and underground oceans and springs of magma where it borders its neighboring planes. Housing untold riches in gemstones and veins of precious metals, the Plane of Earth is an attractive setting for planar travelers seeking wealth and willing to risk danger and the wrath of elementals, shaitans, and other inhabitants who resent the plunder of their home.

While elementals have little organized society, the shaitan genies' Peerless Empire rules much of the plane from its capital, the Opaline Vault—a rainbow-lit city within a 30-mile-wide geode cavern. The shaitans have long been at war with the efreet in the neighboring Plane of Fire, and while the earth genies are less prone to slavery than their rivals, the shaitans brook little dissent, and their rule can be harsh. They are downright welcoming, however, compared to Ayrzul the Fossilized King, the evil elemental lord of earth who rules a great expanse of rock from his radiation-poisoned domain, the Blistering Labyrinth.

PLANE OF FIRE

PLANE

N FIRE

Category Inner Plane

Divinities elemental lords of fire, Feronia

Native Inhabitants azers, efreet, fire elementals, magma dragons, petitioners (fire pneuma)

Like a great, gleaming ball of flame situated at the heart of the Astral Plane, the Plane of Fire is the outermost plane of the Inner Sphere. A perpetual ocean of fire with skies of smoke, storms of raining cinders, and lakes and rivers of magma flowing along its border with the Elemental Plane of Earth, the plane is incredibly hostile to those unprepared for its natural hazards. Yet it houses one of the most well-known and traversed cities in all the planes: the City of Brass, capital of the Dominion of Flame. Floating above a sea of fire upon a great hemisphere of magical brass, the City of Brass is a monument both to efreet cosmopolitan grandeur and tyranny, the latter embodied by the grand sultana of the efreet. Outside of the mercantile districts and the palaces and temples of the fire genies, the city houses a vast enslaved underclass of salamanders and others, including creatures from other planes.

The efreeti domain is not absolute, and elsewhere in the plane are nations of fire mephits and the remains of an ancient azer empire. While they don't form any cohesive, organized nations, the plane's fire elementals are ruled over by the plane's most powerful entity, Ymeri the Queen of the Inferno, the evil elemental lord of fire whose reign has gone unquestioned since the imprisonment of her good-aligned rival Atreia eons ago.

PLANE OF WATER

PLANE

N SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY WATER

Category Inner Plane

Divinities elemental lords of water

Native Inhabitants brine dragons, marids, petitioners (water pneuma), water elementals

Beyond the skies of the Plane of Air, the clouds grow darker and condense into the vast, spherical, liquid shell of the Plane of Water. Its nearly limitless stretches of saline, fresh, and brackish seas teem with all manner of oceanic life, lit by light from the border with the Plane of Air and descending into black, benthic depths where it borders the Plane of Earth. While the plane is perfectly amenable to water-breathing creatures, air-breathing travelers must provide their own supply of air or magical means to breathe. Bubbles of breathable atmosphere are relatively rare and securely guarded, anchored over places of trade and commerce with outsiders, such as the great city of Vialesk, founded by immigrant undines. The plane's oceans, dotted by vast forests of kelp, magical currents, and strange phenomena, play host to empires of merfolk, predatory and expansionist sea devils, and the holdings of the plane's great brine dragons.

While marids once claimed nearly absolute dominion over the plane of their origin, their empire long ago fell into deterioration and disunity. Their ravaged cities sank into the depths, and their present-day holdings remain a shadow of their former grandeur. Kelizandri the Brackish Emperor, the evil elemental lord of water and cause of their ruin, rules the dark, saline depths, feasting on all rivals and hoarding the vast, stolen wealth of the fallen marid cities. Unlike other subjective gravity planes, on the Plane of Water, a creature moves based on its swim Speed and must use actions to Swim if it doesn't have one.

TRANSITIVE PLANES

At a minimum, each Transitive Plane coexists with one or more other planes, a relationship oversimplified by stating that Transitive Planes are just used to get from one plane to another. The mists of the Ethereal Plane overlap the planes of the Inner Sphere, while the Astral Plane borders every other plane in existence like the backstage of the cosmos. Bright and dark mirrors of the Material Plane, the First World and Shadow Plane overlap the mortal world, albeit often in bizarre ways such that a short distance in one might be a vast gulf in the other. The daring, wise, or desperate can utilize these planes to bypass barriers in the Material Plane or rapidly cross vast distances through much swifter travel.

ASTRAL PLANE

PLANE

N SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY TIMELESS

Category Transitive Plane

Divinities Alseta, Apsu

Native Inhabitants petitioners (untethered), shining children

The Silver Sea surrounds the planes of the Inner Sphere, separating them from those of the Outer Sphere. The Astral Plane provides the backdrop against which the River of Souls flows from the Material Plane, ushering departed spirits toward final judgment. Far from an empty void, the Astral's silver substance churns with currents and storms from the metaphysical heat of the Plane of Fire, and where it touches the chaos of the Maelstrom, the resulting eddies interact with the memories of the dead to produce fleeting simulacra and even demiplanes.

The River of Souls draws the attention of soul-hunting daemons and opportunistic night hags like sharks drawn to the scent of blood. Led by psychopomps, a cross section of nearly every type of celestial and monitor in existence, along with some fiends, defends the proper flow of souls against such predators. Running opposite the River of Souls is the flow of raw, unaligned quintessence spun off from the so-called Antipode, channeled by aeons back toward the Positive Energy Plane.

Travelers within the Astral find the plane untouched by the passage of time, a property exploited by many mortals fearing old age. Time, however, is not easily escaped, and upon exiting the Astral Plane, a creature finds this debt catching up to them, potentially aging to dust in moments.

ETHEREAL PLANE

PLANE

N SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY

Category Transitive Plane

Divinities Alazhra

Native Inhabitants ether spiders, night hags, petitioners (terrorized)

The Ethereal Plane is a vast, misty realm overlapping each of the Inner Planes. Formed by the interacting tidal forces of creation and destruction from the Positive and Negative Energy Planes, this plane swirls with currents and eddies of fog, lit only by erratic pulses of soft green luminescence and dimly visible light of those planes it overlays, visible but ever intangible. While mortals most often use the Ethereal as a means of transit, moving by force of will in the absence of gravity to bypass barriers on their own plane, the Ethereal hosts dangers and wonders, things lost or abandoned in the mists, and things spun from local eddies in the ethereal protomatter. Predatory monsters, ether spiders, night hags and their goddess Alazhra, and all manner of incorporeal undead roam the Space Between Spaces.

While travelers can easily become lost in the mists with little to guide them, the plane does host some permanent structures, drawing adventurers or dissuading them. One such location, the House of the Itinerant Soul, houses wayward or lost souls, offering visitors shelter and a way to avoid turning into undead while avoiding the pull of the River of Souls. The grand cathedral also serves as a focus for mortal planar travelers, given its safety and the presence of friendly spirits willing to serve as guides in the surrounding mists.

FIRST WORLD

PLANE

N ERRATIC METAMORPHIC

Category Transitive Plane

Divinities the Eldest

Native Inhabitants fey, linnorms

The First World was a first draft of the Material Plane, crafted by divinities to test their metaphorical crafting materials and palettes of colors before setting it aside to create a second, final version of their work. A realm of extremes—savage, primal, and beautiful—with colors and sensations brighter and more intense than the mundane world created after it, the First World is populated by fey and the divine entities known as the Eldest. Mirroring mercurial fey whimsy, the First World's laws of nature

constantly and unpredictably change. Distance and time are wildly inconsistent, such that mortal travelers might spend an hour or a day within the First World, only to find a century or only a few seconds passed once they return to their own plane.

The First World stands outside the cycle of souls, something the fey call the Great Abandonment, save for rare worshippers of the Eldest whose souls incarnate here as fey. However, the plane's proximity to the Positive Energy Plane provides an environment bursting with all manner of strange life and a general absence of true death for its native fey unless they leave—as did gnomes. Natural gates in wild places of the mortal realm connect to the First World, which fey often use to visit the Material Plane or ensnare mortals for their own capricious desires.

SHADOW PLANE

PLANE

N SHADOW

Category Transitive Plane

Divinities velstrac demagogues, Zon-Kuthon

Native Inhabitants caligni, d'ziriaks, kayals (fetchlings), petitioners (the mutilated), umbral dragons, velstracs

A murky, distorted, and imperfect mirror of the Material Plane, the Shadow Plane overlaps the Material Plane and serves as a buffer or conduit between it and the Negative Energy Plane. The Shadow Plane exists in a state of perpetually dim half-light, the landscape containing similar features to the overlapping Material Plane, but in warped or twisted fashions. Cities on the Material Plane might exist on the Shadow Plane, sometimes in ruins and sometimes as terrible, frightening replicas. The darkness also holds points of beauty and relative safety, such as the great city of Shadow Absalom. The bleak doppelganger of Golarion's own Absalom hosts cross-planar trade facilitated by a permanent, one-way portal out of the gloom.

The Shadow Plane is populated by dark, altered versions of creatures from the Material Plane, many of them immigrants that have adapted to the shadow after being trapped in the realm for generations. The shadow natives known as kayals—also known as fetchlings—were originally humans before thousands of years of exposure to the Shadow Plane and breeding with strange beings forever altered them. Velstracs, who long ago fled from Hell, have since adopted the Shadow Plane as their home, spreading their horrific message of perfection through mutilation in service to their victim and patron, the god Zon-Kuthon. In contrast, d'ziriaks originated within the Shadow Plane itself, as have the fearsome umbral dragons ruling self-crafted fiefdoms within the shadows. Greatest of these is Argrinyxia, who rules over Shadow Absalom.

OUTER SPHERE PLANES

The planes of the Outer Sphere are the manifest realms of alignment: chaos, evil, good, law, neutrality, and their admixtures, populated by celestials, fiends, monitors, and others who promote these moral concepts. These planes are the backdrop upon which the mortal afterlife reaches its apparent conclusion, and the end destination of the River of Souls. The Outer Planes are regions of stability adrift in the raw, chaotic quintessence of the primordial Maelstrom, its tides forever gnawing at their edges even as mortal souls



sustain them. The Abyss manifests as cracks in the Outer Sphere's fabric, while rising from the metropolitan Axis is the Boneyard's spire, the location where mortal souls are judged and then sent to their final destinations, be they reward, suffering, or oblivion. The Outer Planes are places of majesty, wonder, terror, and danger outstripping anything mortal adventurers might encounter anywhere else.

ABADDON**PLANE****NE****Category** Outer Plane**Divinities** Ahriaman, daemon harbingers, Fumeiyoshi, Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Lao Shu Po, Urgathoa, Zyphus**Native Inhabitants** daemons, night hags, nightmares, petitioners (the hunted)

A perpetual eclipse looms above the bleak wastelands of Abaddon, shedding an eerie half-light over a landscape of toxic, disease-ridden swamps, volcanic wastes, fog-shrouded forests, and the glittering, memory-devouring ribbon of the River Styx. An unnatural silence blankets the plane, cut only by the wails of petitioners falling from the sky like screaming, falling stars, or those already condemned upon the ground, desperate to find safety that doesn't exist. Daemons, the physical embodiments of death and oblivion, roam unchecked, owing allegiance only to the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Death, Famine, Pestilence, and War. In the courts of the Horsemen and the neutral grounds of trade cities such as Awaiting-Consumption, the soul trade serves daemon hunger and industrialized oblivion. Night hags and other creatures ply the trade or make their way along the margins of daemon society, eager to avoid consumption themselves by the plane's nihilistic masters. Urgathoa and Zyphus claim divine domains here, their petitioners granted freedom from predation. Yet something far worse glares down upon these gods and the Horseman alike. Abaddon's perpetual eclipse may be nothing less than the lidded, comatose eye of the Bound Prince, the First Horseman, betrayed and cast down by the Four, forgotten by the cosmos at large, but far too powerful for them to destroy—waiting, watching, and hungering.

ABYSS**PLANE****CE****Category** Outer Plane**Divinities** Camazotz, demon lords, Droskar, Ghlauder, goblin hero-gods, Gyronna, Lady Nanbyo, Lamashtu, nascent demon lords, qliphoth lords**Native Inhabitants** demons, petitioners (larvae), qliphoth

Like a corrosive rot in the roots of the Outer Sphere, or an antithetical, rival reality run aground into the Maelstrom at the dawn of time, the Abyss is a place of horror and destruction fed by mortal sin. Each of its innumerable regions is a unique iteration of chaos and evil, each with its own terrible and twisted environment, with one driving maxim: the strong survive, while the weak suffer and are destroyed. Ruled by demons, and before them by the alien, nightmarish qliphoth, the Abyss and its native beings seek only to ravage and destroy. While demons routinely rampage out into other planes when the Abyss manifests a

great planar rift, the denizens of the Abyss are fractured and self-destructive. Demon lords such as Dagon, Pazuzu, and Zura, and even gods including the ascended demon lord Lamashtu, the Mother of Monsters, fight for dominion over the Abyss as much or more than they threaten the other planes. Though dangerous, not every realm of the Abyss is immediately hostile to the prepared traveler. Shamira's city of Alushinyrra in the Midnight Isles and Abraxas's library-city of Diovangia in the realm of Pleroma are each welcoming in their own dark ways. Even those who survive a journey through the Abyss, however, inevitably must resist being deeply corrupted by the experience.

AXIS**PLANE****LN****Category** Outer Plane**Divinities** Abadar, Brigh, Chaldira, halfling pantheon, Irori, Lissala, Milani, Norgorber, primeval inevitables**Native Inhabitants** aeons, inevitables, petitioners (remade)

Axis is a realm of pure, absolute law, unhindered by the moral concerns of good or evil. The plane takes the form of a vast, gleaming, perfectly structured city. Built at the base of Pharsma's Spire, the Perfect City is a bulwark against the chaos of the Maelstrom and Abyss, with vast mechanical armies of inevitables marching forth to explore, define, and pacify an imperfect, unruly universe. Axis is also home to axiomites: beings composed of living mathematics and equations who helped create the first inevitables. Axiomites continue to work on the maintenance of the inevitables, but increasingly turn their attentions to the planar city of Axis itself; as with any city, Axis requires non-stop maintenance and improvement in order to resist the march of time.

Axis's natives are far from the only inhabitants of their cosmopolitan realm. Devils and archons often visit along with petitioners, mortal travelers, and smaller numbers of most every other kind of extraplanar being. Abadar and other lawful deities make their homes here. The empty, former domain of Aroden languishes here, while below the streets lies Norgorber's domain, a labyrinthine undercity.

BONEYARD**PLANE****N TIMELESS****Category** Outer Plane**Divinities** Achaekek, Groetus, psychopomp ushers, Pharsma**Native Inhabitants** petitioners (the dead), psychopomps,

The Boneyard spans an impossibly tall and ever-growing spire of gleaming quintessence that rises up into the silver void of the Astral Plane. As the destination of the River of Souls, the Boneyard is where the souls of the mortal dead arrive for judgment and for Pharsma and her psychopomp servitors to direct them to their respective afterlives. Pharsma's domain is separated into eight courts, each corresponding to one of the other planes of the Outer Sphere and collecting the souls due to that plane. Not every soul goes unchallenged, and proxies of gods and planes argue and debate over souls, with final arbitration conducted by Pharsma herself.

While Pharsma rules absolutely within the Boneyard,



she is not the only divinity there. The demigod psychopomp ushers dwell within the plane in service to her, and the deity Achaekek dwells below at the spire's root. Looming high above as a skull-faced moon waits Groetus, the god of the end times, his orbit slowly decaying in minuscule iterations supposedly counting down to the last days of the cosmos.

Pharasma's courts and the surrounding Graveyard of Souls are not the only features atop the spire. Beyond the graveyard, the Spirelands manifest environments much like those of the varied Material Plane worlds, filled with the souls of neutral petitioners who have nowhere else to go as they are unclaimed by any gods and unaligned with any particular ethos.

ELYSIUM

PLANE

CG

Category Outer Plane

Divinities Calistria, Cayden Cailean, Desna, elven pantheon, empyreal lords, Gorum, giant pantheon, Kofusachi, Milani, Nocticula

Native Inhabitants azatas, petitioners (the chosen)

Verdant, wild, and unrestrained by law, where passion and creation are fostered and rewarded, the plane of Elysium is a place of wild, idealized natural beauty. The so-called Promised Land and its inhabitants represent a wide variety of freely given benevolence, often willing to directly aid visitors but more often serving as inspirations and muses to foster positive change and self-realized success. Elysium's petitioners, known as the chosen,

appear as idealized versions of their mortal selves, each pursuing their own self-determined actions and finding their own unique paths to join the ranks of the plane's celestials.

Azatas—the plane's primary denizens—organize into fleeting, competitive courts, each rewarding heroism and creativity above all else. Elysium hosts a number of resident deities, including Calistria and the elven pantheon, Cayden Cailean, Desna, Gorum, and various empyreal lords. Visitors from across the planes are drawn to Elysium's Wandering City of Emerald Song, a mobile, impermanent, and ever-changing city of lillend azatas organized by their princess, Anduarine the Muse, filled with art, craft, revelry, song, and trade.

HEAVEN

PLANE

LG

Category Outer Plane

Divinities dwarven pantheon, Easivra, empyreal lords, Erastil, Iomedae, Shizuru, Torag, Tsukiyo

Native Inhabitants archons, petitioners (the elect)

The great mountain of Heaven is the realm of structured benevolence made manifest. Organized into seven tiers, the mountain's solid appearance is actually malleable, making way for a vast assemblage of varied environments to accommodate both its own celestials and the souls who migrate there. Devoted to defending the innocent and crusading against the wicked, Heaven's archons marshal into vast armies, commanded by their own empyreal lords. Angels collaborate with the archon legions



but typically act in more direct service to Heaven's resident deities, with Iomedae, Erastil, and Torag the most prominent among them.

Petitioners known as the elect manifest at the mountain's base, and their subsequent climb up the seemingly endless, unreachable heights is both a literal and figurative journey. Progress is about personal growth and spiritual purification as the petitioners grow more and more attuned to the plane. Likewise, progress from one layer to the next is often impossible without permission from the archons or spiritual alignment with Heaven itself. Most visitors arrive at the city of Heaven's Shore, a place open to both traders and to pilgrims of good intent. Access beyond its heavily guarded walls is difficult, to say nothing of scaling the mountain. At its pinnacle is the Garden, Heaven's ultimate layer. Unattended and empty, the Garden is a beautiful, transcendent mystery even to its resident deities, and the source of the plane's call of self-perfection to its petitioners.

HELL

PLANE

LE

Category Outer Plane

Divinities archdevils, Asmodeus, Dahak, Erecura, General Susumu, infernal dukes, Minderhal, Yaezhing, Zursvaater, queens of the night

Native Inhabitants devils, hellhounds, petitioners (the damned) Hell is the realm of devils, the multiversal seat of tyranny and malignant law, and the divine domain of Asmodeus, the Prince of Darkness. Here every act is authorized, calculated, recorded, and set like perfectly ordered clockwork within a vast machine driven on methodical suffering and greased with pain and purification. The nine inverted layers of Hell violently oppose the surrounding fabric of the Maelstrom, each layer shaped to reflect the nature of its ruling archdevil. Avernus's volcanic wastes, ruled by Barbatos, are the marshaling place of Hell's armies, and where newly damned souls are shackled and shuffled off to their assigned torment. Dispat's layer of Dis is a great iron city: brutal, beautiful, and terrible. The layer of Erebus comprises both the sewers of Dis and the vaults and treasuries of Hell, ruled by Mammon, a great genius loci embodied by the very wealth locked within Hell's coffers. Ruled by Belial, the layer of Phlegethon hosts Hell's forges, while Geryon's watery realm of Stygia houses Hell's libraries. Moloch's smoldering, ash-draped forest realm of Malebolge is the training site of the infernal armies, and Baalzebul's frozen layer of Cocytus torments the imprisoned, starving damned. Mephistopheles rules the layer of Caina, a realm of cages and torture suspended above a pit of hungry darkness, while at the very bottom of Hell's infinite pit, Asmodeus rules unquestioned from his throne in Nessus.

MAELSTROM

PLANE

CN METAMORPHIC

Category Outer Plane

Divinities Besmara, Hanspur, Hei Feng, Naderi, Nalinivati, Nethys, orc pantheon, protean lords, Sivanah, Speakers of the Depths, Sun Wukong, Yamatsumi, Ydersius

Native Inhabitants proteans, petitioners (the shapeless)

The Maelstrom, infinite and ancient, spawned the other Outer Planes in cosmological prehistory and surrounds them like a vast metaphorical—and at times literal—ocean of raw, chaotic quintessence. Where the Maelstrom borders these other planes, its structure takes on their characteristics, albeit in an unpredictable, chaotic fashion. Beyond these so-called Borderlands, however, the Maelstrom reverts to its true nature, the Cerulean Void: a trackless, liquid infinity devoid of stability and permanence where serpentine proteans create and destroy with profound frivolity. The proteans are paradoxically organized into discrete choruses, each with its own philosophy and goals in service to the Maelstrom. Swirling with oddities and wild magic, bereft of laws and structure, the Maelstrom also serves as a conduit between the other Outer Planes utilized by armies of extraplanar beings, hordes of demons spilling forth from the Abyss, and the innumerable protean choruses seeking to return the rest of the planes to the true freedom of the chaos from which they emerged. Sufficiently powerful magic can stabilize the chaos for a time, allowing for the creation of demiplanes and stable islands. The massive planar trade city of Galisemni is most prominent among these, drifting through the chaos.

NIRVANA

PLANE

NG

Category Outer Plane

Divinities Daikitsu, empyreal lords, Gruhastha, Kazutal, Kurgess, Qi Zhong, Sarenrae, Shelyn

Native Inhabitants angels, petitioners (the cleansed)

The pastoral paradise of Nirvana is the realm of purest good, a plane that promises sanctuary to the weary and enlightenment and transcendence to those who seek it out. Filled with beautiful wilderness of all types in perfect harmony with its occupants, Nirvana's wilds are home to angels and others. The plane's petitioners, known as the cleansed, most often take the forms of glorified, sapient wild animals, though many eventually leave their carefree existence to aid others, ascending to assist the benevolent works of angels. Devoted to guiding and assisting mortals, angels are often charged with delivering important messages that reflect the will of benevolent deities.

Various divinities make their home amid Nirvana's wilds, including a host of empyreal lords and, most prominently, Sarenrae and Shelyn. While the great cities of High Ninshabur and Llorith welcome visitors, most mortals visiting Nirvana witness the plane's beauty and supernatural feeling of peace but rarely encounter many of its residents, as the plane itself protectively hides much of its contents from any but the most selfless and pure of heart. The plane's hinterlands hint at hidden mysteries, including legends that the plane shelters the vanished heroes of innumerable mortal worlds, peacefully sleeping until their peoples' times of greatest need.

DIMENSIONS

Existing in the metaphorical space between the Transitive Planes and smaller, finite demiplanes, dimensions are a category unto themselves, defying the neat categorization of planar scholars and adventurers. Seemingly infinite in

scale, not necessarily spatial in the same way as a plane, and overlaying every other plane at once—including one another—dimensions and planes are most significantly differentiated in how each of them breaks the commonly held rules of the other. Although some scholars include other extraplanar realms within the ranks of dimensions, only two such realms are uniformly agreed upon and classified as such. The Dreamlands, also known as the Dimension of Dreams, is readily accessed by mortal dreamers, while the Dimension of Time is notorious for the near impossibility of accessing it as well as the bizarre, often deadly restrictions upon travel to and within its bounds.

DIMENSION OF TIME

DIMENSION

N **ERRATIC** **STATIC**

Category dimension

Divinities Tawil at'Umr, Yog-Sothoth

Native Inhabitants hounds of Tindalos, petitioners (the unbound) Among the most obscure planes of existence, the Dimension of Time is virtually impossible to access by conventional methods of planar travel. Instead, travelers much perform complex and difficult rituals described within the pages of such monstrously rare tomes as the *Necronomicon* and the *Book of Serpents, Ash, and Acorns: Shadows of What Was and Will Be*. Compounding the plane's obscurity, each traveler's experience seems to be unique, and most who attempt the journey never return. Every manner of magic that interacts with the plane invariably draws the attention of creatures such as the hounds of Tindalos. The proper flow and continuity of time seems to self-correct for any attempted meddling, often with violence.

Those few who have gained entry and returned describe the plane as a swirling storm of blurred images, the composite of millions of interwoven timelines around their own, with a single doorway allowing access to one's own past. Travelers appear as transparent images of themselves, but the plane seems averse to any attempt to alter the past, no matter the means or the intention. Such attempts often end in the offending individual erased from existence or trapped within closed time loops to limit the damage they inflict upon the overall flow of time.

Supposedly, like an eye in a storm, at the dimension's heart is the legendary realm of Stethelos and its terrible occupant Tawil at'Umr. Tales of this realm speak only of a great city, a vast green meadow, and the rushing sound of an ocean emptying over an immense and terrible waterfall.

DREAMLANDS

DIMENSION

N **FLOWING**

Category dimension

Divinities Elder Mythos pantheon

Native Inhabitants animate dreams, Denizens of Leng, Leng spiders, petitioners (dreamers)

Created and sustained by the collective dreams of sleeping mortals, the Dreamlands (also called the Dimension of Dreams) overlays the Ethereal Plane. When a creature dreams, regardless

of the location of their physical body, they interact directly with the Dreamlands. Sleeping creatures cast themselves into the plane in idealized avatars known as lucid bodies, and their dreamscapes are immune to outside entry by standard magic such as *plane shift*, requiring obscure, more specialized spells to access. The dreamers of each mortal world generate a cluster of dreamscapes, like drifting bubbles atop a deeper ocean of permanent dreams formed from the collective mass of slumbering desires, dreams of especially powerful dreamers, and the dreams of ancient, obscure entities—including the gods of the Elder Mythos. While most dreamscapes are safe, travelers in the deep, permanent Dreamlands face living, animate dreams and the predation of night hags from the Ethereal Plane, as well as stranger beings spawned within the core itself.

Some scholars postulate a distinct region within the dimension for nightmares, much as the more stable inner portions of the dimension exist separately from the transient, ever-forming and evaporating mortal dreamscapes at its edges. Others conflate this nightmare region with the demiplane of Leng, while still others dismiss this notion but speculate that Leng is somehow accessible to dreamers who intentionally seek it out.

DEMIPLANES

Demiplanes are much smaller and more limited than planes or dimensions, and they come into being more easily. They may arise naturally where the raw chaos of the Maelstrom churns at the border of the Astral, crystallize around shed memories of dead mortals on their way to judgment, or coalesce within the mists of the Ethereal set into motion by the forces of the Positive and Negative Energy Planes. They can also be crafted by will and powerful magic to suit their designers' whims. Almost innumerable, each is distinctly finite, with their own nature and rules set at their creation.

Desna's demiplanar realm of Cynosure exists as Golarion's literal north star, silently visible in the night skies, hosting her servitors and petitioners in her divine realm at its heart. Other demiplanes are crafted by mortals, such as the Refuge of Nex, created by the titular archmage seeking respite and solitude, and the Hao-Jin Tapestry, a demiplane stocked with its creator's collection and accessed through a literal tapestry artifact she fashioned as its entrance.

Created not by gods or mortals, the Akashic Record is a demiplane thought to exist deep within the Astral as a repository of the collective knowledge and memories of the cosmos, secure and unchanging, but so difficult to access that most doubt its very existence. Other demiplanes serve darker purposes and are perhaps best left forgotten, though their mysteries often tempt the ignorant, the foolish, and the desperate. The Prison of the Laughing Fiend serves to bottle its enigmatic and godlike occupant, Tegresin the Laughing Fiend, bound by nameless divinities whose nature and reason changes with each telling of the story, while the Dead Vault was crafted at Golarion's core by the gods themselves to forever bottle Rovagug the Rough Beast, lest he escape and devour all existence.

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CHAPTER 3: SUBSYSTEMS

When your game goes into uncharted territory or you want to emphasize an element of gameplay that usually gets overlooked or condensed into a single check, you can use a subsystem. As the name implies, subsystems are extensions of the main rules system that allow you to explore a particular topic or style of play at your table.

Subsystems are a great way to add depth to aspects of your game that don't occur in combat but still have high stakes. This chapter begins with Victory Points, a structure that underlies much of the chapter, to help you build your own subsystems. Next are some of the most common subsystems you might need in your game, with advice on how to use and modify them. This chapter is organized into the following sections.

- **Victory Points** (page 148) provides you a framework with which to build your own subsystems, detailing the fundamental structure that Pathfinder uses for its subsystems.
- **Influence** (page 151) gives rules for more in-depth social encounters involving influencing NPCs.
- **Research** (page 154) shows you how to build an interesting structure for scenes where PCs research information.
- **Chases** (page 156) are designed to represent the fast-paced feel of movie chase scenes.
- **Infiltration** (page 160) allows you to build infiltrations and heists where careful planning helps the PCs maintain an edge against their adversaries and pull off incredible capers.
- **Reputation** (page 164) breathes life into the world around the PCs, as various groups of NPCs react favorably or unfavorably to the PCs' actions, and PCs' status with those groups changes.
- **Duels** (page 166) provides a simple architecture for one-on-one showdowns between adversaries.
- **Leadership** (page 168) allows PCs to attract people to a cause, giving them cohorts and organizations to look after.
- **Hexploration** (page 170) teaches you how to build exploration maps on a hexagonal grid to give your PCs the thrill of discovering secrets within uncharted or unfamiliar territory.
- **Vehicles** (page 174) allows you to run encounters involving vehicles and capitalize on their potential to help PCs explore on a larger scale and at a faster pace.

DECIDING TO USE A SUBSYSTEM

When you have an exciting subsystem available, it can be tempting to use it anytime it can possibly come up (for instance, replacing every social scene with the influence subsystem). However, subsystems are most effective when used with intention. Subsystems are best when used for a component of the game that's meant to be at least a significant portion of a single session. Think about whether you want a different style of play than normal before you decide to use a subsystem, since that's what subsystems are best suited for. You should avoid using a particular subsystem if many members of your group don't like it, or if use of a subsystem during play devolves into the PCs making a series of rolls that don't contribute to telling an interesting story.

It's important to leave enough time and mental energy to make the subsystem feel special and to bring all the components and elements of the subsystem to life in the game world. A subsystem stripped of all its life and story depth can become nothing more than a large number of die rolls, and the last thing you want is to lose the magic, especially with a subsystem the PCs enjoy. Sometimes, a simple check is the right way to handle the scene, and that's okay! The subsystems will be there when you need them to spice up an adventure or really dive deep into a particular element or scene.

COMBINING SUBSYSTEMS

Some of the subsystems in this chapter could interact in interesting ways when combined. For instance, the influence subsystem could be part of how you build up reputation, or a piece of the plan in an infiltration. Or you could have a hexploration chase with a rival adventuring group, encountering obstacles in each hex as you race for the prize—while using vehicles to travel faster! Ultimately, it's up to you to decide how two combined subsystems should interact to tell your group's particular story, though a good rule of thumb is to have a backdrop subsystem that you're tracking on a longer term to which the shorter-term subsystem contributes.

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VICTORY POINTS

You'll often find that your games could use a way to track progress toward a goal so that you don't have to just keep everything in your head. This section explains how to build your own subsystems for tracking success via Victory Points. Many other subsystems throughout the chapter use these as well, though often by a different name.

Victory Points (or VP) are a powerful tool in your GM arsenal, as they allow you to track the PCs' progress using a subsystem to go beyond the results of a single check. Victory Points are versatile; you could track and resolve them within a single encounter, or you could collect them over the course of an entire campaign to determine the ending of the story.

NAMING YOUR VICTORY POINTS

It can be fun to rename your Victory Points, to better reflect the subsystem they track. The term "Victory Points" is unspecific, so you can create a name for your Victory Points that fits the theme of your adventure and helps the players feel more like they are taking part in the type of activity your subsystem represents. Examples of renamed VPs include Influence Points (page 151), Infiltration Points (page 160), Research Points (page 154), and Reputation Points (page 164). The name should be representative, and the PCs should understand what it refers to. You can leave off the word "Points" if you prefer, though this section often retains it while describing how Victory Points can be used.

VICTORY POINT SUBSYSTEM STRUCTURES

There are a few common structures for tracking Victory Points that you might use for your new subsystem. You could come up with a structure based off one of the subsystems below, or you could create your own completely different structure if none of them match the way you're running your game. The most important thing is to consider how the PCs or their opposition gain or lose various forms of Victory Points.

ACCUMULATING VICTORY POINTS

The most common structure is to accumulate Victory Points toward a total, either stopping after reaching a success threshold or collecting as many Victory Points as possible in a given time frame and then measuring the results against various thresholds. The influence subsystem on page 151 is a great example of this

structure in action: each PC has a certain number of chances to influence various NPCs, and after reaching a particular threshold of Victory Points with an NPC, the PCs have convinced that NPC.

In a variation of this structure, the PCs' adversaries can also accumulate Victory Points, giving the PCs a moving target—either to reach the goal before the adversary or to have more Victory Points than the adversary at the end of a given time frame. This is a great structure for you to use in a situation where the PCs face opposition rather than having the PCs accumulate Victory Points while adversaries decrease the total, since it's dynamic and less at risk of resulting in a stalemate.

You can track a subsystem at a larger scale, like over the course of an adventure or campaign, by granting the PCs Victory Points for achieving difficult goals or making particular decisions. Such subsystems usually ask the PCs to compare their accumulated Victory Points against several ranked tiers that each having varying results on the story. Typically these results become more positive for the PCs as they acquire more Victory Points, but sometimes succeeding too fully could have unintended consequences, like convincing the workers to support a rebellion so thoroughly that it riles up a mob. If you're making your own subsystem, you might not define these ranks in full, but just use your best guess at the end.

ACCUMULATING ROLLS

In cases where the PCs need to make checks to gain Victory Points, the amount they get for the degrees of success is up to you. The default scale detailed below works in most cases.

Critical Success The PCs gain 2 Victory Points.

Success The PCs gain 1 Victory Point.

Critical Failure The PCs lose 1 Victory Point.

This means that the result of a PC's check usually results in the party gaining either 1 or no Victory Points. However, specialized PCs have a solid chance of earning the party 2 Victory Points, and hare-brained schemes have a fair chance of losing the PCs 1 Victory Point.

DIMINISHING VICTORY POINTS

Using this method, the PCs start with a certain number of Victory Points, and rather than accumulating them, they attempt to avoid losing them. Perhaps the PCs are trying to keep dragon eggs from cracking, or are otherwise attempting to minimize damage, loss, or danger. This variant is less common, but it's great at conveying the urgency of a situation as the PCs lose points. Sometimes it's necessary to add that sense of tension with this subsystem! Typically, when the PCs lose all their Victory Points, a negative event occurs. If they're on a timer, the final results might be better the more points they manage to keep before the time runs out.

DIMINISHING ROLLS

Using this structure, the PCs typically lose Victory Points as a result of failed checks, though they can still lose them for making particularly poor decisions or behaving recklessly. Once again, you can use any scaling consequences that make sense, but the default degrees of success are as follows.

Critical Success If regaining ground is possible, the PCs gain 1 Victory Point. Otherwise, as success.

Success The PCs avoid losing any Victory Points.

Failure The PCs lose 1 Victory Point.

Critical Failure The PCs lose 2 Victory Points.

MULTIPLE POINT SUBSYSTEMS

In a multiple point subsystem, you have more than one point system, each measuring something different. For example, in a long-distance race, the PCs and their opponents both try to gain their own Marathon Points, and whoever gets to 10 points first wins!

Infiltration on page 160 offers a different example of a Victory Point subsystem with multiple types of points. PCs try to get a certain number of Infiltration Points to successfully infiltrate a location while avoiding giving Awareness Points to their enemies through failure.

Consider combining the multiple points with a time factor, like in infiltrations, where the PCs automatically accrue Awareness Points over time at a slow rate.

OBSTACLES AND DCS

When preparing your subsystem, think of the obstacles PCs might face or avenues they can exploit when engaging in your subsystem. Set some DCs for them in advance, using the normal system for setting DCs. Everything else, you can improvise on the spot. If you think your DCs will be higher overall, when you set the number of points needed, choose a value on the lower end (see Setting your Scale below).

Think of some possibilities that are much easier and some that are harder. Who are your PCs opposing, and what weak points might that opposition have that the PCs could exploit? Set those DCs lower or make

ENEMY VICTORY POINTS

In addition to giving both the PCs and enemies Victory Points, as mentioned on page 149, sometimes it makes more sense to have only the enemies gain or lose Victory Points instead of the PCs. Even though the NPCs are also taking actions, it's usually best to increase or reduce the enemy's Victory Points based on just the PCs' actions, since it maximizes the feeling of player agency. In some rare cases where the foes act directly against the PCs, you might have both PC and foe actions increase the foe's Victory Points.

Implementing such a subsystem might mean flipping the normal rolls. For instance, if the PCs were trying to lower their enemies' Influence over a faction, a critical success by a PC would lower the Influence by 2, a success would lower the Influence by 1, and a critical failure might give the enemies something to exploit, raising their Influence by 1. This uses the same effects as an accumulating roll, but "damages" the enemies' VP instead of gaining VP for the PCs' side. While this is very similar mechanically to the PCs gaining VP, the thematic connection is much stronger for an intrigue-based story.

overcoming them grant more VP. PCs who do their research or come up with clever strategies should find it easier to overcome the challenge.

SETTING YOUR SCALE

The number of points it takes to reach a goal will greatly affect how your subsystem feels during play. If you want the subsystem to be used for a single scene, such as one negotiation with a powerful NPC, set the number lower than if it's meant to take up most or all of a game session. The Table 3–1 (page 150) suggests possible values for your Victory Point scale. The "adventure-wide" scale is for subsystems that are part of a larger narrative, granting Victory Points when the PCs overcome entire encounters or dungeons, rather than as an encounter unfolds.

This larger scale is intended for subsystems that take a lot of the party's focus. A subsystem that runs in the background during an adventure should use a smaller scale. This is usually the "adventure-wide, sideline" value. It could be even lower, such as if you have a dungeon-based adventure including several opportunities to interact with a kobold tribe to get some small benefits. Though they appear throughout the adventure, you would use a lower value because attaining the VP is a minor part of the story. In fact, you might choose not to use a VP subsystem at all.

The table also lists numbers for one or more thresholds. These are the point values at which the PCs get a partial benefit (or, for a diminishing subsystem, take a drawback). You should grant partial benefits when the PCs reach a certain threshold or introduce twists to the subsystem to ensure they continue to feel engaged and rewarded over time.

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TABLE 3-1: VICTORY POINT SCALES

Duration of Challenge	VP End Point	VP Thresholds
Quick encounter	3-5	—
Long encounter	7-10	4
Most of a session	15-25	5, 10, 15
Adventure-wide, sideline	15-20	5, 10, 15
Adventure-wide, forefront	25-50	10, 20, 30, 40

The values also depend on various factors. These might include the DCs, the number of chances the PCs get to gain Victory Points, and the flexibility of how the PCs can deploy themselves (for example, if PCs are all forced to try something they might not be trained in, it could cause critical failures). They might also include the amount of effort the PCs need to spend on tasks that don't directly earn Victory Points—such as checks to Discover information about NPCs using the Influence subsystem. Keep all these in mind when deciding what end point you want to use.

RUNNING YOUR SUBSYSTEM

When running your new subsystem, be sure to keep the challenges fresh by using a variety of different skills and options to encourage creativity and cooperation, rather than just using the same check over and over again, where PCs can expect diminishing returns. You can also use timers to encourage each PC to participate or even create

mechanics that directly encourage each PC to participate, like setting penalties for the same PC attempting checks repeatedly, or for two PCs attempting the same check.

You can even have challenges that require all the PCs to participate. For instance, if the party's host is welcoming every guest individually, each PC might have to make an impression in their own way, or during infiltration, each PC might have to test their ability to Impersonate or Sneak. You'll likely find that some approaches should be automatic successes if they're well-suited to the task, or automatic failures for ideas that are likely impossible.

REWARDS

How you structure rewards for your subsystem depends greatly on its scope. A subsystem resolved in a single sitting usually gives accomplishment XP unless it is particularly demanding, in which case it could be considered a full-scale encounter. Meanwhile, subsystems that span over the course of multiple sessions or the entire campaign might generate accomplishment XP at meaningful milestones along the way. If you have a long-spanning subsystem that's fairly low profile and behind the scenes or is not success-oriented, such as a subsystem to track what type of ruler the PCs' patron will become based on the PCs' decisions, you might not give XP directly from the subsystem, since in that case "success" is undefined.

INFLUENCE

When the PCs need to gain favor with or sway over an NPC to achieve their goals, sometimes a Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation check isn't enough to get the job done. In these cases, you can implement the influence subsystem in a social encounter.

Influence is a short-term subsystem wherein the PCs accumulate Influence Points during a social encounter with an NPC to represent their increasing influence. These encounters are a race against the clock to reach Influence Point thresholds in order to sway the NPC. It's perfect for a single social gathering—whether it's a party, a treaty negotiation, or even an attempt to persuade various members of a panel of judges. Because of the variety of Influence skill options and the ability to use Perception to uncover more information, every character has something important to contribute in the influence subsystem, as opposed to situations where only one character has Diplomacy.

The influence subsystem divides a social encounter into rounds, with the number of rounds representing the length of the social event. Rounds last any amount of time that you determine, depending on the needs of the narrative, though somewhere between 15 minutes and an hour is typical. During each round, each PC can act once to either Influence or Discover.

INFLUENCE

CONCENTRATION LINGUISTIC

You attempt to make a favorable impression on an NPC to convince the NPC to support your cause. Choose an NPC, and attempt a skill check to impress that NPC. The DC, and whether success is possible, depend on the NPC's preferences (typically found in the NPC's influence stat block).

Critical Success You gain 2 Influence Points with the chosen NPC.

Success You gain 1 Influence Point with the chosen NPC.

Failure You gain no Influence Points with the chosen NPC.

Critical Failure You lose 1 Influence Point with the chosen NPC.

DISCOVER

CONCENTRATION SECRET

You watch or study an NPC to learn more about that NPC's preferences. Choose an NPC and attempt a Perception check or an appropriate skill check determined by the GM. The DC is typically found in the NPC's influence stat block.

Critical Success Choose two of the options detailed in Success below; you can choose the same option twice to learn two pieces of information from the same category.

Success Choose one of the following: You learn which skill that can Influence the NPC has the lowest DC (skipping any skills that you already know), one of the

NPC's personal biases, one of the NPC's resistances, or one of the NPC's weaknesses.

Failure You learn no information.

Critical Failure Choose a piece of information to learn about, as success, but the information is incorrect. For instance, you



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SAMPLE STAT BLOCK

In this example, the PCs try to convince a grizzled landlord to not evict a theatrical troupe from a dilapidated building he owns. It's a 3rd-level challenge. He is a busy, practical man and gives the PCs only 45 minutes (3 rounds) to make their case.

DANPHY MOLLWETHER

LE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Penny-pinching landlord

Perception +9

Will +12

Discovery DC 13 Mercantile Lore, DC 18 Perception, DC 16 Society

Influence Skills DC 16 Accounting Lore (noting how the theater could be made profitable), DC 16 Crafting (volunteering to repair the building), DC 20 Intimidation, DC 20 Performance, DC 22 Diplomacy, DC 24 Deception

Influence 4: Mr. Mollwether gives the troupe 1 week to get him his back rent, with interest, before evicting them.

Influence 6: Mr. Mollwether gives the troupe 1 month to get him his back rent before evicting them.

Influence 8: Mr. Mollwether allows the troupe to stay, reduces their rent, and forgives half their debt.

Resistances The landlord thinks in practical terms, with little patience for the "good-for-nothings" of the troupe. Appeals directed at sympathy alone increase the check's DC by 2.

Weaknesses Mr. Mollwether used to visit the theater often as a small child, and performing one of his favorite old songs or plays brings tears to his eyes and reduces the Performance DC by 2.

Background Mollwether was raised by wealthy parents who loved the arts and took him to the theater often. A scandal left the family broke, and Danphy clawed his way back up to a decent living. Becoming something of a slumlord, he owns several properties now and still feels he must exploit others to survive.

Appearance An elderly man in cheap dress clothes, Mr. Mollwether looks like he's never felt a moment of love for anyone in his whole life.

Personality Impatient, crotchety, skeptical

Penalty Antagonizing Mr. Mollwether by "sermonizing" or "wasting his time" causes him to cut the meeting short, reducing it to 2 rounds instead of 3.

might think the NPC is susceptible to flattery when actually the NPC is resistant to flattery.

INFLUENCE STAT BLOCKS

NPCs in the influence subsystem have little need for many of the statistics you'll find in an ordinary creature stat block. However, it might help you to prepare for

the social encounter by creating an influence stat block for each prominent NPC. These are optional; if you can keep most information straight in your head, you might skip this step or just write down the first three categories to keep the numbers straight.

Influence stat blocks are flexible and contain only the stats that you are essential to running the NPC during a social encounter, leaving the rest out. The main stats that matter are the NPC's Perception and Will modifiers.

NPC NAME

TRAITS

A succinct description of the NPC, such as "Famous musician" or "Popular baron."

Perception The NPC's Perception modifier, plus potentially relevant spells such as *true sight*.

Will The NPC's Will modifier, plus any special adjustments.

Discovery The Perception DC to Discover information about the NPC, as well as any skill checks to Discover their DCs.

Influence Skills The skills the PCs can use to Influence the NPC are listed here with their DCs, in order from the lowest DC (the skill that works best) to the highest DC. If a skill isn't listed but a player gives a strong narrative explanation for using it, you can add it as an appropriate DC (usually the highest listed DC). Diplomacy should usually be on this list, but should rarely be the best skill to Influence an NPC, in order to encourage and reward using Discover to learn and cater to an NPC's interests.

Influence Thresholds The number of Influence Points required to Influence the PC, and the benefits for meeting them. Some NPCs might have multiple influence thresholds, granting the PCs additional benefits or favors as they cross more thresholds.

Resistances Some NPCs are resistant to certain tactics, biased against certain types of people, or may get defensive when a certain topic comes up. Any of these makes it harder for a PC to convince them. For instance, an NPC might find flattery inane, dislike wizards, or bristle at any mention of their ex-spouse. Typically, an NPC's resistance increases the DC of the associated check to Influence by 2 (or 5 for stronger resistances), but it could have farther-ranging consequences, such as losing Influence Points or angering the NPC enough that attempting to Influence them again is impossible.

Weaknesses Most NPCs have at least one weakness that clever and observant PCs can use to their advantage, whether it's a deep-seated insecurity, a desire for power, a favorite hobby, a bias toward a certain group, or a hidden secret the PCs could threaten to expose. When a PC incorporates an NPC's weakness, it typically decreases the associated Influence check's DC by 2 (or 5 for stronger weaknesses), but it could have farther-ranging effects, such as gaining automatic Influence Points or even automatically influencing the NPC regardless of how many Influence Points the PCs have achieved so far.

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After the influence stat block, you might want to list important information to help you roleplay the NPC and incorporate the NPC into your influence encounter. You can list any of the following details that are relevant to your NPC: their background (a brief bio focusing on information relevant to the encounter), appearance, personality (this can just be a list of adjectives), affiliations, public goals, hidden agendas, or the penalty for antagonizing the NPC (or possibly for failing to Influence the NPC, depending on the way you structure the encounter).

SETTING DCs

When setting DCs, it's often good to start with a "social level" for the NPC and set their DCs accordingly. Use the DC adjustments from page 504 of the *Core Rulebook* just like you normally would. A good starting place is setting the NPC's Will modifier, then taking that DC and adjusting it for skills that are more or less likely to work.

For instance, for a 3rd-level challenge, you might give an NPC a +12 Will modifier and use 22 as the base DC. You might say that's the DC for Diplomacy but then determine that the NPC is difficult to intimidate, and so you apply the hard DC adjustment to make the Intimidation DC 24. Maybe you also determine

that she loves different varieties of wine, resulting in an incredibly easy DC adjustment to get DC 12 for Alcohol Lore.

RUNNING AN INFLUENCE ENCOUNTER

When running an influence encounter, let the PCs be creative and use a diverse set of skills whenever possible. Be open to improvisation, and change the structure of the encounter if something interesting presents itself. The PCs set the pace and choose with whom they interact. It's up to you to make sure every NPC is distinct, react to the PCs' interactions with the NPCs, and lend overall structure to the encounter by making sure it feels like a living, breathing event rather than just a series of skill checks.

Think about how the number of rounds of a social encounter relate to the overall event. For instance, if you have a four-course banquet and 6 rounds, you could have 1 round for introductions before the food arrives, 1 round for each of the courses, and 1 last round of conversations after the final course. NPCs might filter in and out or become unavailable for conversations as they are occupied by various tasks, or become particularly eager to engage a PC. That sort of change help makes the NPC feel a bit more real and helps break up any repetition in your encounter.

RESEARCH

When the PCs are trying to discover important information while challenged by a time limit or other interesting twist, the research subsystem is just the right thing to lend their efforts more urgency and weight.

In the research subsystem, PCs accumulate Research Points and learn new information or gain other benefits upon reaching specific thresholds. Use this subsystem if the PCs face a time constraint, rival research group, or other form of external pressure or condition that could end the PCs' efforts early. Otherwise, you can simply use the rules in the *Core Rulebook*, since the PCs are free to keep rolling until they uncover everything there is to find.

In this subsystem, time passes in rounds spanning several hours to a day of research. Each round, the characters use the Research exploration activity to gain Research Points (RP). As time passes and the party earns more RP, they gain knowledge and rewards, but also might face consequences or events. Some of these events might interrupt the round with a different kind of encounter (disrupting the Research activity), such as a social encounter with an intelligent book or a combat encounter with a guardian.

RESEARCH

CONCENTRATION | EXPLORATION | LINGUISTIC

You comb through information to learn more about the topic at hand. Choose your research topic, section of the library, or other division depending on the form of research, and attempt a skill check. The skills to use and the DC for the check depend on the choice you made.

Critical Success You gain 2 RP.

Success You gain 1 RP.

Critical Failure You make a false discovery and lose 1 RP.

BUILDING A LIBRARY

"Library" is the general term the research subsystem uses to designate the setting of the PCs' research. Despite the name, the library doesn't necessarily consist of a quiet hall full of books. It could be an Astral memory palace, a collection of iconographic artwork, or even a group the party is questioning. In most cases, to engage the whole party and add a little decision-making to the research, you'll want to give your research topic or library at least one variable or subdivision that the

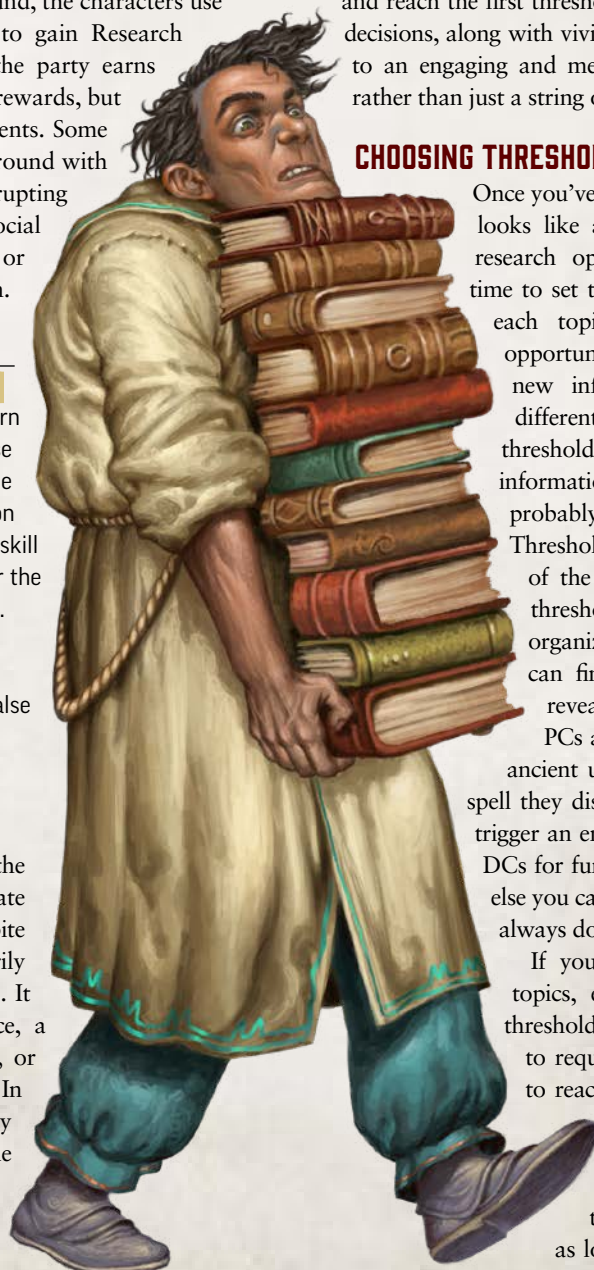
PCs need to decide how to handle. For instance, you might give the PCs three different research topics to study, each using different skills and providing different rewards. The library might have several rooms or sections with different challenges to research, allowing you to reward PCs with skills that aren't typically associated with research; perhaps the books on aeromancy are all flying above the top shelves of towering bookcases, requiring a round of Athletics checks to represent climbing up and down ladders to retrieve them and reach the first threshold. A variety of skills and decisions, along with vivid descriptions, are the key to an engaging and memorable research session, rather than just a string of die rolls by the wizard.

CHOOSING THRESHOLDS

Once you've decided what your library looks like and how the library and research options are structured, it's time to set the research thresholds for each topic. Thresholds are your opportunity to reveal intriguing new information and introduce different types of challenges. Each threshold should provide interesting information; if it doesn't, you should probably have fewer thresholds. Thresholds can change the state of the library (perhaps the first threshold is simply cleaning and organizing the library so the PCs can find the tomes they need), reveal information, give the PCs a reward (like access to an ancient uncommon or rare feat or spell they discover in library's depths), trigger an encounter, alter the skills or DCs for further research, or anything else you can imagine, but they should always do something.

If your library covers multiple topics, each has its own set of thresholds. You'll typically want to require fewer Research Points to reach each one and use fewer thresholds per topic.

Think about the constraints preventing the PCs from researching as long as they want, and use



those constraints to determine how many Research Points they must earn to reach each threshold. You don't need to evenly space thresholds—you could require very few Research Points to learn crucial clues you want to ensure the PCs receive and a much larger number to reach the final threshold that grants a special reward.

LIBRARY STAT BLOCK

When you build a library, you can use a stat block to organize the information. In a published adventure, you'll find libraries presented in the format below. There's no need to include entries that aren't applicable for your library.

LIBRARY'S NAME

LIBRARY (LEVEL)

TRAITS

Division Name and Description Whether it's a section of a physical library, one of several research topics the PCs are studying, or something more creative, this is the name of one of the library's divisions. If the divisions are separate topics, they'll each have their own thresholds, but if the divisions are separate areas all related to the same topic or topics, they might have RP maximums instead, after which the PCs have exhausted the information in that area. Repeat these sections for the library's other divisions; if using RP maximums, make sure the divisions provide enough Research Points to reach the final threshold.

Research Checks The skills or other checks the PCs can attempt to Research the division are listed here with their DCs, in order from the lowest DC (the skill that works best) to the highest DC. If a skill isn't listed but a player provides a strong narrative explanation for using it, you can add it at an appropriate DC (usually the highest listed DC). Academia Lore and Library Lore will often be listed in these entries.

Research Thresholds Each threshold lists the number of RP required to reach it, followed by the effects for meeting that threshold. Thresholds are listed in order from first (requiring the fewest RP) to last (the highest threshold).

Beneath the stat block, you can list any events that occur based on timing rather than the PCs' RP total (such as a threatening message arriving on the third day), as well as any other important details.

RUNNING RESEARCH

When running the research subsystem, think about the two factors that set the pace of the research and allow you to break it up: the length of each round of research, and the thresholds in the research. Use both of these in tandem to breathe life into the session and draw the players into the game. Ideally the PCs are aware of whatever pressure requires them to finish the research, so as rounds pass, the tension increases. As long as the PCs are able to get the information they came for, it's fine if they don't learn everything the library has to offer; in fact, you might intentionally create a situation allowing the PCs time to glean only some of a list of special rewards, forcing them to prioritize their favorites.

SAMPLE STAT BLOCK

In this example, the PCs are trying to research hidden occult secrets about hags known only to the fey of a strange sylvan library. It's a 7th-level challenge. If you'd like to use this sample library for a different research topic, just change the results of each threshold and replace any Occultism Research checks with checks appropriate to the new topic!

GLADE OF FORGOTTEN TIME

LIBRARY 7

FEY PRIMAL

Field of Tomeflowers Five-foot stems open up into colorful petaled tomes; **Maximum RP** 10

Research Checks DC 18 Academia Lore or Library Lore, DC 23 Occultism

Loremother Tree A powerful intelligence slumbers deep within this ancient oak, awakened by communion or music; **Maximum RP** 15

Research Checks DC 21 Performance, DC 23 Nature, DC 25 Occultism

Sprite Swarm Thousands of iridescent sprites flit about, eager to offer tidbits of information, though it is not always reliable; **Maximum RP** 5

Research Checks DC 23 Diplomacy, DC 23 Occultism, DC 25 Society, DC 28 Perception

5 Research Points The PCs learn apocryphal fey legends that the first hags were once cruel fey queens twisted by inner corruption. They learn details about hag reproduction, changelings, and the hag mother's Call.

10 Research Points The PCs learn the location of an ancient, twisted grove in the First World rumored to hold a secret treasure connected to hags. Attaining this knowledge comes at a cost: hag malice solidifies into two will-o'-wisps and animates some of the glade's plant matter into a shambler. The three creatures attack the PCs together.

15 Research Points The PCs learn a variety of occult folk divinations said to detect the presence of nearby hags. Among them is a functioning uncommon spell: *read omens*.

20 Research Points The loremother tree stirs and partially awakens, issuing the PCs a dire warning about danger in the knowledge they seek. Replace the loremother tree's Performance Research check with a DC 28 Diplomacy check to convince the tree to share further knowledge.

25 Research Points The whole glade goes quiet, and the PCs feel a pall fall over their hearts. The PCs are close, but all Research check DCs increase by 2.

30 Research Points The PCs learn even more esoteric wisdom about hags. However, they have drawn the attention of a coven of annis hags, who materialize to destroy the party and their newfound knowledge. If the PCs run out of time before reaching this point, the coven erases any further information before attacking the PCs out of spite.

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CHASES

When the PCs pursue a fleeing adversary or quarry—or someone chases them instead—adding twists and turns to the pursuit builds suspense and makes the outcome more uncertain than if it were based on Speed alone. The chases subsystem helps you create cinematic scenes where the PCs must quickly overcome obstacles, from following someone through a crowded market to carrying a desperately urgent message over a dangerous mountain pass.

The *Core Rulebook*'s Speed rules work well for short sprints through fairly clear terrain. Over longer distances through more complex environments, though, the path is rarely so straightforward. The chase subsystem shifts the emphasis from raw Speed to facing down the kinds of unpredictable obstacles that characters might encounter in a longer pursuit so you can create a thrilling chase scene.

Chases are a special type of encounter. Each round, the pursued character or characters act first, then the pursuing characters act. Typically, to reduce variance, the PCs roll checks to progress while their opponents proceed at a steady pace, but if you want to emphasize the back-and-forth nature of a particular chase, you could have both sides roll instead. Characters in the same group can act in whatever order they prefer, each taking a turn. A character must act on their turn. If they pass their turn or are unable to act, they're unable to help the group and automatically cause the group to lose 1 Chase Point.

Depending on the scale of your chase, establish at the beginning how long each round lasts so the PCs understand how much they can accomplish in that time. Is it essentially a 3-action turn, or does it take minutes, hours, or days?

OBSTACLES

During a chase, all the characters must overcome a series of obstacles that represent challenges—from locked doors to deceptive bogs—during the different legs of the pursuit. These obstacles aren't separated by specific distances; the distance is narrative and can vary between obstacles as needed for the story you're telling. Travel times between obstacles can vary, too. The time scale you choose determines how PCs can act when dealing with an obstacle.

Each obstacle requires a certain number of Chase Points to overcome—typically 1 per party member for a standard obstacle, though particularly challenging obstacles might require more (listed in an obstacle's Chase Points entry). Typically, there are multiple ways to overcome an obstacle; for example, characters could evade a guard or bribe them to look away. Each approach typically requires a skill check or Perception check, but sometimes a saving throw, an attack roll, or something even more unusual, like a casting a certain spell (listed in an obstacle's Overcome entry).

On a character's turn, they describe what they do to help the group get past the obstacle. They then attempt any required roll, or perform the required action for a choice without a check. If they attempt a roll, the result determines how many Chase Points the character gains.

Critical Success The PCs gain 2 Chase Points.

Success The PCs gain 1 Chase Point.

Critical Failure The PCs lose 1 Chase Point.

If the means of bypassing the obstacle helps automatically without requiring a check—such as using a certain spell to assist—the PCs typically get 1 Chase Point. You can increase that to 2 if you feel the action is extremely helpful.

Chase Points represent the ability of the whole group to bypass the obstacle. A character who critically succeeds is able to help the other characters continue onward, while one who critically fails needs extra assistance. Players often have ideas for ways to overcome the obstacle beyond the choices you created for the obstacle. If their idea is applicable, you'll need to determine the DC and skill or other statistic being used for that approach. This is great as long as it's creative, but be wary of a situation where a character who is legendary at a skill tries to justify how they can bypass every obstacle with that skill, such as using Acrobatics to tumble around them all, or the like. You can determine that some tactics just won't work against certain obstacles, or would help only one character without benefiting the rest and therefore aren't all that useful.

Once the PCs accumulate enough Chase Points to overcome the obstacle, they immediately move to the next. Extra Chase Points don't carry over to the next obstacle—each requires its own number of Chase Points to overcome. However, anyone who hasn't already taken their turn that round can still take it against the new obstacle. Consequently, the characters best suited to overcoming the current obstacle might act first, since the remaining characters might be better suited against the next one. The number of Chase Points the PCs have can never fall below 0.

It might help to put your obstacles in a stat block for easy reference. Inside published adventures, chase obstacles are likely to be presented in stat block form, as follows.

CROWD

OBSTACLE 1

Chase Points 4; **Overcome** DC 15 Acrobatics or Athletics to weave or push through, DC 13 Society to follow the flow

Throng of people crowd the streets, making it difficult to continue the chase.

BUILDING A CHASE

When building a chase, first build your obstacles and then decide how far ahead the pursued character or characters begin and at what pace the NPCs will move. Having the NPCs clear one obstacle per round is a good rule of thumb,

but it could vary depending on the situation, and should especially be slower against obstacles that require more than 1 Chase Point per character to overcome.

Select or build obstacles highlighting a variety of different skills and other options so everyone in the party has a moment to shine. When choosing what skills can bypass a given obstacle, ensure a variety of approaches can work. If you've already decided that an obstacle uses Stealth, selecting Thievery as the other option doesn't really offer opportunities for different types of characters, since those who are good at Thievery are very likely the same ones who are good at Stealth. On the other hand, offering Athletics as an alternative gives a champion who's terrible at Stealth a way to help. The group can help cover for a character who is less capable at a particular obstacle, but it's more fun for players to present substantially different options for each obstacle.

Use the following guidelines to determine how many obstacles you need for your chase. These numbers assume that the pursued party can reach a certain location to end the chase (as described in Ending Chases). If there's no such escape, you might need more obstacles.

Short: 6 obstacles, about 10–20 minutes of game time

Medium: 8 obstacles, about 15–25 minutes of game time

Long: 10 obstacles, about 20–30 minutes of game time

SETTING OBSTACLE DCs

When you set the DCs for an obstacle, you'll typically be using simple DCs. Use a proficiency rank that's generally appropriate for the PCs' level if you want the obstacle to be a significant one. As noted earlier, you'll typically want to select a couple different ways the group can get past an obstacle. At least one check should be have an easy or very easy adjustment, while the other check should have a standard or hard DC. In some cases you might use something other than a simple DC; for example, if a specific NPC has put up a magical barrier, you would use their spell DC. This might result in some pretty tough DCs or even impassable obstacles, so use this carefully!

If a PC improvises a different way to get around an obstacle from what you planned, set the DC just like you would normally when picking a DC on the fly. Don't worry about adjusting the DC of the check to be easy or very easy, because the PC is likely to be good at the skill they've chosen to use.

SHORTCUTS AND SPLIT PATHS

You might want to build a chase with multiple paths that split and rejoin so you can have a shortcut (with easier DCs or fewer obstacles) or paths that appeal to different types of characters. For instance, one obstacle might allow a PC who critically succeeds at a Perception check to find a faster path along a canal, without the obstacles of a busy street. This can be fun, but can also split up the group. Familiarize yourself with the Solo Chases sidebar above to make similar adjustments for a divided group.

SOLO CHASES

Sometimes circumstances might require you to run a chase where the PCs are each progressing individually, rather than as a group, such as if they get split up. The danger therein is that a player can easily become frustrated if their character is stuck at an obstacle where it's extremely difficult to succeed at either choice, and no allies can help them. In these chases, it's best to allow even a single success be enough for a character to progress to the next obstacle, and have a critical success give the character a +2 circumstance bonus on their first check against the next obstacle.

ENDING CHASES

Once you have the obstacles, decide the end conditions. Chases often end when the pursuer reaches the same obstacle as the pursued, leading to a combat encounter or other scene. However, it's less clear when to end a chase otherwise. It's typically best to have an obstacle that ends the chase with the pursued character getting away, as long as they overcome the obstacle before being captured. This is usually better than ending the chase after a certain number of rounds, because reaching a hideaway makes more narrative sense and because you might not be able to predict how far the pursued characters move in those rounds, making you run out of obstacles. You can also end the chase in favor of the pursued characters if they ever get a certain number of obstacles ahead of the pursuers (typically three), as the pursuers simply lose the trail. You should still have an end point to the chase, though, in case that never happens.

TYPES OF CHASES

- **Chase Down:** The PCs pursue adversaries. The PCs go second in initiative since they're the pursuers. Start the enemies one obstacle ahead of the PCs (or at the same location for a short chase), and end the chase if the PCs catch up to the enemies, or if the enemies reach a certain location that represents their safety or escape.
- **Run Away:** The PCs attempt to escape. They'll go first in initiative since they're being pursued. It's usually best to start them one obstacle ahead of their foes and end the chase if they reach a certain location or are three obstacles ahead of their foes at the end of a round.
- **Beat the Clock:** The PCs try to get through all the obstacles before a certain number of rounds passes, such as if the PCs are trying to outrun a natural disaster or race in a timed challenge. The number of obstacles should usually be equal to the number of rounds.
- **Competitive Chase:** The PCs and their adversaries are both chasing the same thing or trying to reach the same location, and whoever gets there first wins. This works like chase down, except that either party could win. Because there is more than one set of pursuers, you might have the PCs and their competitors roll initiative to see who goes first each round (while still moving all NPCs at a steady rate.)

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RUNNING A CHASE

When running a chase, narrate the scene and give vivid descriptions of the obstacles the PCs face, rather than just reading off a list of skills and immediately having the players start rolling dice and making checks. A chase is a framework for roleplaying, not just a dice game. Encourage the PCs to describe what they're doing, and how they're helping their comrades overcome each obstacle.

Typically, it's best to tell the players the DCs of the default options, so they can make informed decisions. At the least, you should indicate the relative difficulty of the clear paths. The PCs are adventurers, so they're experienced at assessing which path is going to be easier or harder.

Try to make it feel like the PCs are really part of a chase scene, like in a movie. As each side makes progress, describe how they pull ahead or close the gap. PCs far from their foes might hear shouts in the distance. As they get closer, they catch glimpses, and then finally see their quarry in full view once they're on the enemies' heels. Think about how the events of the chase affect the environment, as well. For instance, if a kaiju is chasing after the PCs, after the PCs overcome an obstacle consisting of a thick copse of trees, you could describe how the kaiju flattens the trees beneath its feet as it stomps after them.

VISUAL AIDS

It can help your players visualize the chase to use a series of cards or a rough map (such as a large-scale city map rather than a 5-foot grid) to show locations. Use one miniature or token to represent each side of the chase. You might place cards with obstacle names on them face down, revealing them as PCs reach them, and letting a PC peek at an upcoming card if they scout it from a distance.

IF THE PCS GET STUCK

Sometimes despite their best efforts, an obstacle will stymie the PCs over and over again. In most cases, after 3 rounds of the PCs struggling with an obstacle that requires the standard number of Chase Points, it's a good idea to just say they found another way around it. If the obstacle requires more or fewer Chase Points, you can change the number of rounds before letting them get past it. If presenting another way around the obstacle just doesn't make sense, such as if a spherical barrier completely blocks the PCs, you might introduce an NPC or other outside force that can help them bypass it, but at a high cost.

SAMPLE OBSTACLES

You can use the following obstacles in your chases, which are organized by environment. The name is followed by the level of group they're best suited for, and many include both a basic version for lower levels and a higher-level version.

UNDERGROUND OBSTACLES

Crumbling Corridor (1st)	DC 13 Acrobatics to avoid disturbing the walls, DC 15 Crafting to shore up the walls; Quaking Corridor (11th) DC 25 Acrobatics, DC 30 Crafting
Fungus Grotto (1st)	DC 15 Fortitude to endure poisonous spore, DC 13 Survival to avoid the mushrooms; Virulent Fungi (5th) DC 20 Fortitude, DC 18 Survival
Pit Trap (1st)	DC 13 Athletics to quickly climb out, DC 15 Perception to spot the trap before it's triggered; Exceptional Pit Trap (5th) DC 20 Athletics, DC 18 Perception
Wandering Gelatinous Cube (1st)	DC 18 Occultism to identify its deficiencies, DC 15 Stealth to sneak past; Wandering Black Pudding (7th) DC 24 Occultism, DC 19 Stealth
Collapsed Tunnel (5th)	DC 20 Athletics to dig through, DC 18 Perception to find a secret door around; Ancient Collapse (12th) DC 30 Athletics, DC 28 Perception
Pendulum Trap (5th)	DC 20 Reflex to dodge the blades, DC 15 Thievery to disable the tap; Panoply of Pendulums (12th) DC 30 Reflex, DC 28 Thievery
Wooden Portcullis (8th)	DC 25 Acrobatics to squeeze through, DC 20 Athletics to lift the gate; Iron Portcullis (11th) DC 25 Acrobatics, DC 30 Athletics

URBAN OBSTACLES

Crowd (1st)	DC 15 Acrobatics or Athletics to weave or push through, DC 13 Society to follow the flow; Festival Crowd (4th) DC 20 Athletics, DC 18 Society
Fruit Cart (1st)	DC 13 Athletics to vault over or smash through, DC 15 Intimidation to make the merchant move it; Merchant Pavilion (5th) DC 20 Athletics, DC 22 Intimidation
Guard Dog (1st)	DC 14 Nature to calm, DC 16 Stealth to sneak past; Guard Roc (9th) DC 26 Nature, DC 28 Stealth
Rickety Rooftops (1st)	DC 15 Acrobatics to cross clotheslines, DC 13 Athletics to jump from roof to roof; Crumbling, Steep Rooftops (5th) DC 18 Acrobatics, DC 20 Athletics
Wooden Fence (1st)	DC 13 Athletics to climb over, DC 15 Thievery to unlock a gate; High Iron Fence (8th) DC 20 Athletics, DC 25 Thievery
Gang of Hooligans (2nd)	DC 13 Deception to trick, DC 15 Stealth to sneak past; Elite Criminals (12th) DC 28 Deception, DC 30 Stealth
Twisting Alleyways (2nd)	DC 17 Perception to find a path, DC 13 Society to recall a map; Multi-Story Maze (7th) DC 22 Perception, DC 20 Society

WILDERNESS OBSTACLES

Deep Mud (1st)	DC 15 Athletics to slog through, DC 13 Perception to find a path; Horrid Bog (5th) DC 20 Athletics, DC 18 Perception
Downpour (1st)	DC 13 Fortitude to push through, DC 15 Nature to predict the weather; Magical Thunderstorm (5th) DC 30 Fortitude, DC 25 Nature
Rope Bridge (1st)	DC 15 Acrobatics to cross carefully, DC 13 Crafting to make repairs; Solitary Frayed Rope (11th) DC 25 Acrobatics, DC 30 Crafting
Rushing River (1st)	DC 15 Athletics to swim or hop across stones, DC 13 Survival to find a ford nearby; Flash Flood (5th) DC 20 Athletics, DC 18 Survival
Steep Hills (1st)	DC 13 Athletics to climb across, DC 15 Perception to find easier path; Rugged Mountain (5th) DC 20 Athletics, DC 18 Perception
Swarm of Wasps (1st)	DC 15 Fortitude to endure stings, DC 13 Survival to smoke them out; Those Aren't Wasps! (5th) DC 20 Fortitude, DC 18 Survival
Tangled Forest (2nd)	DC 17 Perception to find the way, DC 13 Survival to plot a path; Enchanted Forest (5th) DC 20 Perception, DC 18 Survival



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INFILTRATION

Not all elements of an adventure can be resolved with force of arms and the sizzle of deadly magic. Sometimes subtlety is required to circumvent foes or accomplish a goal. When the characters need to rely on improvisation and fast thinking to infiltrate a stronghold or organization to save the day, the infiltration subsystem provides a framework for those adventures.

An infiltration requires the heroes to employ guile and subtlety to achieve one or more objectives without directly confronting their enemies. The PCs' goal might be sneaking into a den of thieves to relieve them of ill-gotten gains, navigating the winding passages of the city watch headquarters to break a friend out of prison, or putting themselves in just the right spot to snatch up the right person or the correct item at just the right time. Whatever the case, the heroes are working to avoid drawing the attention of an opposing party, such as the members of a thieves' guild, the prison guards, or the invited guests at an upscale gala. Should the heroes draw too much attention, they might be attacked, arrested, or thrown out—in any case, blocked from accomplishing their goal.

An infiltration is fundamentally a roleplaying activity. The players narrate their characters' actions in response to the situations around them, and the infiltration subsystem provides a framework to measure incremental success within the overall endeavor. An infiltration takes place over the course of multiple rounds, though it's up to you to determine how long a round is. One round might encompass 10 minutes or 1 hour of in-world time, or something completely different depending on the story and your group's preferences.

BUILDING AN INFILTRATION

When creating an infiltration, you'll want to start with the party's broad goals and an idea of how much time you and your players want to spend. The more complex an infiltration, the longer it will take to play out at the table.

OBJECTIVE

The first thing you'll need to determine is the party's objective, or broad goal. Maybe the PCs need to find their way into some hidden sanctum, find a particular person within an organization, locate and get away with a bit of treasure, or plant a piece of evidence. An infiltration can consist of a single objective, but a more complex one might include two or more objectives in sequence—the PCs might first need to find a way to enter the cult's sanctum, then open the vault, and then escape with the relic.

To achieve an objective, the PCs must overcome a certain number of obstacles—specific challenges the PCs face, such as getting across a moat or past a nosy butler. For a simple objective, they might need to overcome only one or two obstacles, while a more complex one might require several.

It's a good idea to offer more obstacles as options than the characters need to overcome, and the PCs don't all have to choose the same ones. This represents the fact that there's more than one way into a castle, and allows PCs to choose obstacles that play to their strengths. It also means you have more options you can adapt if the PCs decide on a truly novel way to tackle their objective.

Once a character has overcome the required number of obstacles to reach the objective, they move on to the next objective. This might mean that some characters move on to a second objective and start making progress toward it while other characters are still completing obstacles from the first objective. When all characters have completed the final objective, the infiltration is a success!

While the characters are pursuing their objectives, however, they need to avoid notice. Awareness Points (AP) measure the extent to which an opposing party is aware of the PCs' actions, and apply to the party as a whole. As the PCs' Awareness Points increase, the infiltration becomes more difficult as the opposition shores up its defenses. If the PCs generate too many Awareness Points, they are found out and their infiltration fails altogether!

OBSTACLES

Each obstacle has certain statistics that define how it works in play. Infiltration Points (IP) represent a character's progress toward overcoming an obstacle. Each obstacle requires gaining a certain number of Infiltration Points to overcome—typically 1 or 2, but some challenging obstacles might require more. PCs can gain Infiltration Points in multiple ways—usually through a skill or Perception check, but sometimes another roll or even the use of a spell or item. These methods are listed in the obstacle's Overcome entry. Unlike obstacles for chases, these use a difficulty band for the PCs' level, rather than using set DCs.

The Overcome entry also lists whether the PCs need to overcome an object individually or as a group. For individual obstacles, each PC needs to earn the required number of Infiltration Points themselves, while for group obstacles, all PCs working toward that obstacle pool their Infiltration Points toward it together. For example, each PC trying to scale a wall needs to earn points on their own, but the PCs could work together to search a guildhall for clues, and once one PC has picked a lock, everyone can enter.

A particular PC can overcome an individual obstacle only once during an objective; likewise, the party can overcome a group obstacle only once.

OBSTACLES IN PLAY

On a character's turn, the character describes what they do to get past the obstacle. They then attempt any required check (or perform the required action, if their choice doesn't require a check). The result of the check determines how many Infiltration Points the character gains toward overcoming that obstacle—or whether they instead raise suspicions and accrue Awareness Points!

Critical Success The PC gains 2 Infiltration Points.

Success The PC gains 1 Infiltration Point.

Failure The PCs accrue 1 Awareness Point.

Critical Failure The PCs accrue 2 Awareness Points.

If the character's actions automatically help without requiring a check, like using a spell, they usually gain 1 IP, but you can award 2 for particularly helpful actions.

Sometimes a PC might become stuck on an individual obstacle. Some opportunities (page 162) allow PCs to spend their turn helping others overcome a tricky obstacle.

PACING

The number of obstacles to require the PCs to overcome for an objective depends partly on the complexity of the infiltration. For shorter infiltrations, use fewer and lower-IP obstacles; for a longer, more complex heist, you can add more obstacles with greater complexity. Also, bear in mind how many checks the PCs will need to attempt to complete their obstacles. An objective with mostly low-IP group obstacles will move quickly because only a few rolls are required, compared to one with mostly individual obstacles that each PC needs to roll separately for.

SAMPLE OBSTACLES

While you'll want to create custom obstacles to suit the details of your infiltration, the following examples can be used directly in many infiltrations, or as inspiration for your own creations. You can also use the sample chase obstacles on page 159 as starting points.

GUARD POST OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 2 (individual); **Overcome** standard, hard, or very hard Deception, Diplomacy, or Stealth

Guards cluster at a checkpoint, alert for unusual activity.

LOCKED DOOR OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 1 (group); **Overcome** hard or very hard Athletics or Thievery

A locked door separates the heroes from their target.

TRAP OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 3 (group); **Overcome** hard or very hard Thievery
A trap bars the characters' passage. This obstacle follows the normal degrees of success for an obstacle, with the following modification for critical failure.

Critical Failure The PCs accrue 2 AP as normal, and the PC who critically fails the Thievery check also triggers the trap.

SETTING INFILTRATION SKILLS AND DCS

Many of the sample infiltration activities and events give a DC range instead of a fixed DC. Set the DCs based on the standard DC of the party level using the table on page 503 of the *Core Rulebook*, and adjust them using Table 10-6: DC Adjustments on page 504. When given a range of skills for an activity or event, you should vary the difficulty based on the needs of the story. For instance, if a PC is Scouting a Location, you might want to use a low DC for Stealth (because it's easier to scout when unnoticed), a hard one for Perception (because while the PC might see the enemy, the enemy might also see them), and a very hard DC for Society (because walking in like you belong is difficult if you don't have an invitation or the right uniform). This not only adds a certain degree of plausibility, but by planning for and allowing a broad range of skills as means to complete the activity, you also become better prepared for when your players improvise.

AWARENESS POINTS

The trick of any infiltration is to get it done before anyone notices. Awareness Points measure the opposition's awareness of the PCs' efforts, helping you keep the pressure on and ramp up the urgency. While Infiltration Points are specific to a given obstacle, Awareness Points are a single pool spanning the entire infiltration and all participants.

Awareness Points increase in three different ways. When a PC fails a check to overcome an obstacle, they incur 1 Awareness Point (or 2 on a critical failure). Other failed checks during the infiltration typically don't increase the Awareness Point total unless the failure would reasonably cause a disruption. Awareness Points also increase by 1 at the end of each round of the infiltration, as the passage of time makes it more likely that the PCs will be discovered. Finally, the PCs earn Awareness Points whenever their activities are disruptive enough to draw attention to the infiltration, subject to GM discretion.

The effects of Awareness Points occur when the PCs reach certain thresholds. The specific effects and thresholds are up to you and your story, but typically for every 5 AP the PCs accrue, the challenges become harder, and if the PCs accrue enough Awareness Points (usually equal to twice the number of Infiltration Points necessary for the party as a whole to overcome all necessary obstacles), the infiltration fails.

Each threshold should have an effect. It might increase the DCs for obstacles, introduce a complication, spark a combat encounter, or have other effects. Reaching the highest tier of Awareness Points means that the PCs fail, but that doesn't have to be the end of the story! Failed infiltrations are an opportunity to introduce new challenges and move the story forward in a different way.

This basic Awareness Point scheme for an infiltration requiring the PCs to earn 10 IP can be used as is or tailored to your game.

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5 Awareness Points: Suspicions are raised. Increase the DCs for obstacles by 1. The first time the PCs reach this tier, a complication occurs.

10 Awareness Points: The first time the PCs reach this tier, a complication occurs.

15 Awareness Points: Increase the DCs for obstacles by a total of 2, and the first time the PCs reach this tier, a complication occurs.

20 Awareness Points: The infiltration fails.

COMPLICATIONS

Sometimes when a plan goes sour and seems like it can't get worse, it does. Complications are unexpected problems that compound the difficulty of a challenge. The party might trigger a complication by critically failing a check to overcome a challenge, by reaching a certain threshold of Awareness Points, if you need to spice up the infiltration, or through their own decisions—maybe the wizard's castle has various wards, each triggered when a PC attempts to use a different kind of magic.

Many complications increase Awareness Points or otherwise make infiltration more difficult. A common form of complication is attracting the attention of guards who try to stop, capture, or even kill the PCs. When this happens, the infiltration may briefly shift into encounter mode as the PCs attempt to defeat their assailants—hopefully taking care not to arouse more suspicions. The sounds of battle are loud, so unless combat occurs in an isolated area or the PCs take precautions, each round of unmitigated combat noise causes them to gain Awareness Points, at the very least.

When you create a complication, decide on the details of how it will play out. Each complication has a trigger that determines when it occurs. It might affect only a single character, or it might affect everyone in a certain area, and you'll need to determine whether multiple PCs can work together to overcome it or whether only one can. Complications must be overcome before the characters involved can overcome other obstacles, and attempting to overcome a complication takes a character's turn just like trying to overcome an obstacle. Many complications are one-off events and are overcome automatically, even on a failure, though not without a cost. If a complication requires PCs to gain Infiltration Points to clear it, it has an Infiltration Points entry, just like an obstacle.

Don't overwhelm the characters with complications. Typically, you'll want to aim for two complications per AP threshold. Otherwise, the PCs may end up spending more time on the complications than on the heist itself, and the chance of failure may be too high.

The following example is a common complication that could occur in almost any infiltration.

DO I KNOW YOU?

COMPLICATION

Trigger The PCs reach 5 Awareness Points for the first time.

Overcome standard, hard, or very hard Deception, Diplomacy, Performance, or Stealth

Someone thinks they recognize you, and you must either convince them otherwise before slipping away or find a way to dodge the person entirely.

Success You convince or otherwise dodge the person.

Failure You are recognized, and the party accrues 1 AP.

Critical Failure As failure, but the party accrues 2 AP.

OPPORTUNITIES

Not everything that happens during an infiltration is a challenge that must be solved—sometimes PCs can use their turns to aid the group in some way. Opportunities are very similar to obstacles, but they don't provide Infiltration Points or count toward the objective. They instead provide some kind of benefit, such as a magical password to disable security features further along, reducing the party's Awareness Points, or lowering the DC for a later challenge. But opportunities sometimes come with risks—failing can increase the PCs' Awareness Points or trigger complications. You'll need to decide what opportunities are available and when, and whether they can be completed multiple times or only once. For example, the PCs can steal the guard's keys only once, but can cause a distraction several times.

Some opportunities might be available at almost any time in any infiltration, like this example.

SMOOTH THE PATH

OPPORTUNITY

Requirements The PC has successfully completed an individual objective and some other PCs have not.

Having completed your objective, you help an ally who is still trying to reach that goal. Describe how you are helping. This gives the ally the benefits of *Following the Expert* (Core Rulebook 479). In unusual cases, the GM might allow you to attempt a relevant skill check to overcome the obstacle on behalf of the other PC instead.

PC PREPARATIONS

Sometimes the party has a chance to prepare before conducting their infiltration, by scouting a location, bribing officials, and so on. This takes the form of special downtime activities that can give the PCs Edge Points (EP): resources and advantages they can bring to bear during their infiltration, such as stolen uniforms, forged documents, and the like. As with infiltration opportunities, careless work runs the risk of increasing Awareness Points—but in this case, before the infiltration even begins!

Typically, you'll limit the preparation phase in some way, such as by setting a number of days the PCs have to prepare and by constraining how many preparation activities are available to make sure the PCs aren't entering the infiltration with so many Edge Points that the infiltration is no longer suspenseful. The more opportunities for Edge Points you give, the lower you should set the Awareness Point thresholds for complications and failure. Also decide how many times the characters can benefit from each preparation activity—most activities should grant their benefits only once.

You can use the activities below for your infiltration by adjusting the details, but you should also create custom activities that link directly to your story.

EDGE POINTS

Edge Points (EP) represent advantages the party gains by proper planning, quick thinking, the intervention of an ally, or some other benefit. They are typically gained by pursuing opportunities in previous infiltrations or through preparation before the infiltration. When a PC fails or critically fails a check to overcome an obstacle or a complication, they can spend an Edge Point to succeed instead. Some Edge Points can be spent only during particular circumstances—for instance, no matter how well you forge documents, it won't help you unlock a door—so consider using unique tokens to represent such Edge Points.

PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

BRIBE CONTACT

DOWNTIME **SECRET**

Cost A bribe worth at least one-tenth of the Currency per Additional PC listed on Table 10-9: Party Treasure by Level (*Core Rulebook* 509). Doubling this amount grants a +2 circumstance bonus to the check.

Requirements You've successfully Gained a Contact (see below). You offer a bribe to your contact to help the heist in some way. Attempt a hard or very hard Deception or Diplomacy check.

Success The contact accepts the bribe and you gain 1 EP.

Failure You believe you successfully Bribe your Contact and gained 1 EP, but in fact the contact informs the opposition of the attempted bribery, adding 1 AP to the infiltration. The GM can reveal that this Edge Point grants no benefit at any point during the infiltration, as befits the story.

Critical Failure As failure, but adding 2 AP to the infiltration.

FORGE DOCUMENTS

DOWNTIME **SECRET**

You prepare forgeries that might serve as convincing props. Attempt a hard or very hard Society check.

Success You create convincing forgeries and gain 1 EP you can use only when presenting some form of paperwork.

Failure You create unconvincing documents. You gain 1 EP that (unknown to you) grants no benefit when used.

Critical Failure As a failure, but a PC who tries to use the Edge Point gets a critical failure, even if they use the Edge Point after rolling a failure.

GAIN CONTACT

DOWNTIME

You try to make contact with an individual who can aid you in the infiltration. Attempt a normal, hard, or very hard DC Diplomacy or Society check, or a check using a Lore skill appropriate to your prospective contact.

Success You make contact and gain 1 EP.

Failure You fail to make contact.

BUILDING AN INFILTRATION

For most infiltrations, you'll want to detail the site or group the PCs are trying to infiltrate. This might involve mapping a building or fleshing out NPCs within the organization—or, most likely, both. You likely need to know the party's objectives before you can decide on these details, but knowing this information can help you brainstorm the obstacles, opportunities, and complications of the infiltration itself. Also, with details on the site and its adversaries, you can more confidently improvise when the PCs do something unexpected!

Critical Failure You insult or spook the contact in some way. Future attempts take a -2 circumstance penalty.

Special Multiple critical failures might cause the contact to work against the PCs in some way, likely increasing the party's Awareness Points.

GOSSIP

DOWNTIME **SECRET**

You seek out rumors about the infiltration's target. Attempt a normal, hard, or very hard Diplomacy check.

Critical Success You gain inside information about the location or group you're trying to infiltrate. This grants you a +2 circumstance bonus to future checks you attempt for preparation activities for this infiltration. If you share this information, those you share it with also gain this bonus.

Success You gain inside information about the place or group you're attempting to infiltrate that aids your planning.

Failure You learn nothing.

Critical Failure You hear a few mistaken rumors and take a -2 circumstance penalty to your next check for a preparation activity. Word spreads around that you're asking after that group or individual, increasing your Awareness Points by 1.

SCOUT LOCATION

DOWNTIME **SECRET**

You spend time observing the place or group you wish to infiltrate. Attempt a normal, hard, or very hard DC Perception, Society or Stealth check.

Success You make observations that provide 1 EP.

Failure You learn nothing particularly noteworthy.

Critical Failure You misjudge some aspect of what you observed, gaining 1 EP that results in a critical failure instead of a success when used, even if a PC uses the Edge Point after rolling a failure.

SECURE DISGUISES

DOWNTIME

You seek to procure or create disguises. Attempt a normal, hard, or very hard Crafting, Deception, Performance, or Society check.

Success You procure or creates disguises, gaining 1 EP that can be used only to maintain a cover identity.

Failure Your efforts result in an unusable disguise.

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REPUTATION

Sometimes it's crucial to know how groups of people feel about the PCs. That's where reputation comes into play. The reputation subsystem is a simple way to use Victory Points to determine how the PCs stand with such groups.

Reputation is a mid- to long-term subsystem wherein the PCs accumulate or lose Reputation Points with a particular group of people, whether it be a guild, a government, a church, a village, or anything else you can think of. The PCs gain Reputation Points by performing favors for the organization, to a maximum of 50 Reputation Points, and lose Reputation Points by doing disservices, to a minimum of -50 Reputation Points.

FAVORS

Each favor the PCs perform for a group normally grants the PCs Reputation Points with that group.

- Minor favors are simple, basic tasks that don't take too much effort for a PC to perform or much time at the table. Minor favors grant 1 Reputation Point.
- Moderate favors require a significant amount of effort and often take up a session or a noticeable chunk of a single session to complete. Moderate favors grant 2 Reputation Points.
- Major favors are a sizable endeavor, typically an entire quest involving several sessions. Major favors grant 5 Reputation Points.

DISSERVICES

On the flip side, disservices are a catchall for ways the PCs might make a group angry, whether it's through actual malice and planning on the PCs' part or simply by accident. Unlike favors, disservices don't have as easy a correspondence with in-game time; a quick but particularly egregious action could easily still be a major disservice. Disservices normally lose the PCs Reputation Points.

- Minor disservices could be small but significant missteps, or accumulated slights and inconveniences. Minor disservices take away 1 Reputation Point.
- Moderate disservices are more than just a nuisance or annoyance, generally significantly hindering the group's efforts or violating a fundamental tenet of the group's beliefs in a significant but not egregious way. Moderate disservices take away 2 Reputation Points.

- Major disservices are incredibly antagonistic to a group, usually a single brazen act, such as thwarting a cabal's apocalyptic doomsday plan. Major disservices take away at least 5 Reputation Points, or more if they are particularly egregious. They might be so terrible that the PCs immediately lose all their Reputation Points and *then* lose 5 more Reputation Points.

REPUTATIONS

PCs generally start with a reputation of "ignored" with most groups, as most groups have never heard of them. If they are particularly famous or infamous among related groups, the PCs might start at a different reputation of your choice. The reputation is generalized to the whole group—an individual NPC can hold a different opinion.

IGNORED

The PCs either aren't on this group's radar or the group knows about the PCs but is generally ambivalent to them. This is the default for most PCs with most groups, and it carries no special benefits or detriments.

LIKED

The PCs have gained this group's favor. Many members of the group know about the PCs, and those who do are usually friendly to them. At this reputation, only moderate and major favors accrue Reputation Points; it takes more to impress the group further.

ADMIRED

The PCs have earned this group's admiration. The majority of the group knows about the PCs and have an extremely favorable opinion toward them. Many members of the group are helpful toward the PCs, and those who aren't are friendly. Only major favors accrue Reputation Points.

REVERED

The group reveres the PCs as heroes and celebrities. Every member has heard of the PCs, is helpful toward them, and

TABLE 3-2: REPUTATIONS

Reputation	Reputation Points	Raised By	Lowered By
Revered	30 to 50	Major favor	Moderate or major disservice
Admired	15 to 29	Major favor	Any disservice
Liked	5 to 14	Moderate or major favor	Any disservice
Ignored	-4 to 4	Any favor	Any disservice
Disliked	-5 to -14	Any favor	Moderate or major disservice
Hated	-15 to -29	Any favor	Major disservice
Hunted	-30 to -50	Moderate or major favor	Major disservice

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would take major risks to assist them. Only major favors accrue Reputation Points, and only moderate or major disservices can reduce them.

DISLIKED

The PCs have a poor reputation among members of this group. Many members of the group know about the PCs, and are usually unfriendly to them. At this reputation, only moderate and major disservices reduce Reputation Points.

HATED

The PCs have earned this group's ire. The vast majority of the group knows about the PCs and have an extremely unfavorable opinion toward them. Many members of the group are hostile toward the PCs, and those who aren't are unfriendly. When presented an easy opportunity to hurt the PCs, the group will jump at the chance. Only major disservices can still reduce Reputation Points.

HUNTED

The group actively hunts the PCs as scapegoats or nemeses, even at significant cost to itself. Every member has heard of the PCs, is hostile toward them, and would take major risks to thwart or destroy them. Only major disservices can still reduce Reputation Points, and only moderate or major favors can increase them.

RUNNING REPUTATION

Using Reputation Points in the background allows you to track the PCs' status with a variety of groups or factions in your campaign based on the PCs' actions and choices. This is especially useful for a sandbox campaign or other structure with numerous possibilities, helping you build a reactive structure and track how PCs are doing with groups they interact with only occasionally. When the point totals don't fit the story, use common sense. For instance, if the PCs are hunted by the town guard due to a corrupt mayor, but then perform a major quest revealing the mayor's wrongdoing and saving the town, that might jump them from the worst negative reputation to a much more positive reputation. Similarly, the PCs' foes could frame them, harming the PCs' reputation though they've done no disservice.

REPUTATION IN PATHFINDER SOCIETY ORGANIZED PLAY

Pathfinder Society Organized Play uses a version of the reputation subsystem with various factions to offer unique benefits for different characters, with different Reputation Point thresholds that adapted to the Organized Play structure. Check it out for inspiration for reputation in your own game!

DUELS

Sometimes conflicts become personal. It's not the entire group against a challenge, but one character struggling against the skills of a single adversary. In many societies, duels are considered a reasonable way to resolve individual differences, though others consider such practices—especially the more deadly varieties—to be a savage affront to law and order. Duels can come in several forms, and this section gives you rules to run them.



SETTING UP A DUEL

Participants must willingly agree to the duel and to abide by its rules. If one of the duelists breaks the duel's rules (and, more importantly, is caught doing so), that duelist loses, taking any penalties agreed upon when the challenge was accepted. Here are some sample dueling rules.

COMPETE ALONE

It's customary that each participant must compete alone and may receive no help from outside sources. However, some duels pit pairs of combatants against one another (either all together or as tag teams).

LIMITED TOOLS

The participants agree to the tools, including weapons and magic items, before the duel starts. Most combat duels that don't involve magic limit participants to melee weapons and prohibit the use of poison. Some duels forbid the use of polearms and other reach weapons. A spellcasting duel might agree upon a roughly equal number of magic items, and a cap on the power (in game terms, the level) of the items. Some spellcasting duels might prohibit certain types of spells, such as summoning or necromancy.

DURATION

Combat duels typically last either until first blood (hitting and dealing damage) or until one of the duelists is knocked out. Most duels allow a participant to yield, which means they concede victory to their opponent, though sometimes this could diminish their social standing. Duels of talent usually involve several equal turns in which the duelists display their ability.

ADJUDICATION

Most duels are overseen by a third party who ensures the duelists don't break the duel's rules—inadvertently or by cheating. Where duels are legal, this is typically a constable or magistrate. In other places, a cleric or other respected figure serves as judge. Typically the GM plays the judge.

COMBAT DUELS

Unlike the other subsystems in this chapter, a combat duel works almost the same as a normal combat encounter, with a few exceptions. These rules require exceptional focus between two duelists and a third-party arbiter, and thus are not available in a normal combat.

INITIATIVE AND DUELING ACTIONS

Unlike in typical combat, the duelists roll initiative checks at the beginning of each round of combat. Each round the combatant can choose to use Deception, Intimidation, or Perception when they roll initiative. Because a duelist might act twice in a row, durations that last until the beginning of a duelist's next turn might function oddly. A duelist acting second can choose to avoid such abilities that turn, or can choose to act second if they win initiative on the next round.

If the duelist is at least trained in whichever initiative choice they pick, they gain the corresponding dueling reaction that round: Bullying Press for Intimidation, Deceptive Sidestep for Deception, or Sense Weakness for Perception. Neither duelist is aware of what type of roll the other used for initiative—surprise and the use of dueling actions are a part of dueling strategies. Familiars and companions, even when allowed in the duel, can't use these actions, nor can bystanders.

BULLYING PRESS

FLOURISH

Trigger You attempt a melee Strike against your opponent, but haven't rolled yet.

Requirements You're in a duel, you're trained in Intimidation, and you rolled an Intimidation check for initiative this round. If you hit, your opponent becomes frightened 1. If your opponent is using Perception for initiative when this ability is used, they become frightened 2 instead.

DECEPTIVE SIDESTEP

MISFORTUNE

Trigger An opponent hits, but does not critically hit you, with a melee Strike.

Requirements You're in a duel, you're trained in Deception, and you rolled a Deception check for initiative this round.

You draw your enemy in and pull away at the last moment. The triggering opponent must roll again and take the second result. If your opponent is using Intimidation for initiative when this ability is used, they also take a -2 circumstance penalty to the second attack roll.

SENSE WEAKNESS

Trigger You attempt a melee Strike against your opponent, but haven't rolled yet.

Requirements You're in a duel, you're trained in Perception, and you rolled a Perception check for initiative this round.

You pick a precise moment to attack, giving you an edge. Your opponent is flat-footed against the attack. If your opponent is using Deception for initiative when this ability is used, they are instead flat-footed until the start of their next turn.

ENDING THE DUEL

The duel ends when the duel's judge confirms the victory condition, when the judge determines one of the duelists has cheated, or when one of the duelists yields. Note that if either of the combatants attempts to continue the duel

after its end, the combatants should roll initiative and proceed with normal combat.

SPELLCASTING DUELS

Like combat duels, spellcasting duels take place in encounter mode, but their rules are not available during normal combat. They are typically more organized affairs than combat duels. Many spellcasting duels prohibit any sort of combat but spellcasting. They typically have the duelists take turns casting a turn's worth of spells, giving their rivals a chance to counter the spells if they can.

INITIATIVE AND DUELING ACTIONS

In most cases, each duelist rolls initiative normally and proceeds in that initiative order throughout the duel, unlike in a combat duel. Each duelist can roll an Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion check instead of Perception. If they are trained at that skill, they gain the tradition focus of that skill, which allows them to hone in on a certain magical school corresponding to the check they made for their initiative roll. They also gain the Dueling Counter reaction, which enables a duelist to counter their opponent's spell if their tradition focus matches the tradition of that spell. They also gain the Change Tradition Focus action, which changes the duelist's tradition focus to a different tradition. Familiars and companions, even when allowed in the duel, can't use these actions, nor can bystanders.

When mixing a spellcasting duel and a combat duel, use the initiative rules for combat dueling, but allow the duelist to roll Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion for their initiative checks. They still gain the Dueling Counter reaction and Change Tradition Focus action, though Change Tradition Focus is less useful in combat duels.

DUELING COUNTER

MAGICAL

Trigger Your opponent Casts a Spell from the same tradition as your tradition focus.

Requirements You are in a duel and have a tradition focus. Expend a prepared spell or spell slot. You then attempt to counteract the triggering spell with the expended spell.

CHANGE TRADITION FOCUS

Requirements You are in a duel and are trained in the skill for the tradition you're changing your focus to (Arcana for arcane, Occultism for occult, Nature for primal, or Religion for divine). You change your tradition focus to another magical tradition.

ENDING THE DUEL

Just like a combat duel, a spellcasting duel ends when the duel's judge confirms the victory condition, when the judge determines one of the duelists has cheated, or when one of the duelists yields. As with a combat duel, if either of the combatants attempts to continue the duel after its end, the combatants should roll initiative and proceed with normal combat.

LEADERSHIP

While many groups of PCs are isolated heroes who get the job done on their own, other groups enjoy gathering allies and building new organizations of their own. The leadership subsystem allows your PCs to do just that!

Leadership is a long-term subsystem wherein one or more PCs establish a fledgling organization and accumulate followers over time. This subsystem provides a flexible way to reflect the party's growing influence in and connection to the world around them through downtime events and periodic benefits similar to those gained from joining an existing in-world organization. The organization can come into play only during downtime, or it can provide adventure seeds or even play a major role in a campaign.

ORGANIZATION LEVELS

Every organization has a level from 1 to 20. Any organization below level 1 has no followers; it's just an ordinary group of PCs. Unlike many other subsystems in this chapter, leveling up an organization in the leadership subsystem does not involve accumulating points. Instead, the process of growing the organization itself is what causes it to level up! As a reward for quests, roleplaying scenes, or succeeding at other subsystems (particularly influence or reputation), the PCs can add an NPC follower to their organization. At first, only a few level 0 NPCs follow the PCs, but as the party builds up more followers, they can also gain followers of higher and higher level, as well as a small number of higher-level lieutenants to lead groups of followers. Once an organization has recruited enough followers, the organization itself levels up, which increases the maximum level of followers, the number of lieutenants, and the level range of those lieutenants.

TABLE 3-3: ORGANIZATION STATISTICS BY LEVEL

Level	Max Follower		Lieutenant	
	Followers	Level	Lieutenants	Levels
1	1-2	0	—	—
2	3-4	0	—	—
3	5-6	0	1	1
4	7-9	0	1	1
5	10-13	0	1	1
6	14-18	1	2	2
7	19-27	1	2	2
8	28-36	1	3	2-3
9	37-53	1	4-5	2-3
10	54-75	2	6-7	3-4
11	76-99	2	8-10	3-4
12	100-150	2	11-15	3-5
13	151-215	2	16-22	3-5
14	216-300	3	23-30	4-6
15	301-425	3	31-42	4-6
16	426-600	3	43-60	4-7

17	601-850	3	61-85	4-7
18	851-1,200	4	86-120	5-8
19	1,201-1,700	4	121-170	5-8
20	1,701-2,400	4	171-240	5-9

BASE OF OPERATIONS

Beyond the very smallest organizations, PCs need some kind of base of operations the organization calls home. This allows the organization to function and grow in its intended role. For instance, if the PCs run a mercenary army, it might have a keep for training and as a base for defending the nearby area. While organizations usually gain a base of operations early in their existence, they must have one by 6th level unless the story of the organization demands otherwise. A base of operations is not necessarily immobile; a caravan, circus, or flagship (or fleet, for a larger organization) could serve well for wandering organizations.

ORGANIZATION NPCS

Followers and lieutenants are noncombatant NPCs of the levels indicated on Table 3-3: Organization Statistics by Level. When an organization has followers or lieutenants of several levels, most of them are at the lowest possible level. As a rule of thumb, an organization has twice as many NPCs of a given level than of the next-higher level. This allows you to quickly estimate the level composition of the organization's members, but you can of course change the levels of various followers as much as you like. When the minimum level for lieutenants increases, either the lower-level lieutenants level up to the new minimum, or they become followers of more powerful lieutenants the PCs recruit, whichever fits best with the story.

Followers and lieutenants are loyal to the PCs and their organization, working to maintain the organization, its base of operations, and their own way of life. Because of this work, PCs don't need to pay for basic upkeep of their base of operations or for expansions to house the burgeoning activity as their organization grows in level—the followers and lieutenants take care of all of that. But similarly, these followers and lieutenants never get involved in the PCs' adventuring, nor do they provide a source of free magic or labor.

COHORTS AND NEW PCS

While the followers and lieutenants who define an organization's advancement don't accompany the PCs on adventures, sometimes the organization is the perfect plot hook to introduce an NPC who will be traveling along



with the party or a new PC hoping to join the party. For instance, if the PCs are running a mercenary army, a rising officer might become a new PC. Treat such NPC cohorts and PCs just like any other additional characters in the party, with an enriched story that ties them to the PCs.

RUNNING LEADERSHIP

When running a game with the leadership subsystem, adding new NPCs who join the PCs' cause becomes a type of reward you should grant the PCs consistently throughout the campaign. For a typical rate of growth, give the PCs enough followers for the organization to level up at roughly the same rate as the PCs. In some cases, you might want to vary that rate—sometimes drastically. Perhaps the 10th-level PCs have a 20th-level organization with top lieutenants nearly as powerful as the PCs, or maybe the PCs start gathering followers only at 15th level and start their organization from scratch as a 1st-level organization.

LEADERSHIP EVENTS

During downtime, or over the course of long stretches of time when the PCs aren't in downtime but their organization is operating in the background, you should periodically provide special leadership events. These are in addition to the events you would normally provide the PCs during downtime. These should generally be a good mix between the following three categories.

Opportunity: An opportunity offers the PCs a chance to steer the ship for their organization by making a decision that shapes the organization moving forward, with consequences generally ranging from neutral to a mix of good and bad. For instance, the Aspis Consortium offers the PCs a deal to store their goods in the PCs' mercenary fort. Accepting gives the PCs money, but they'll have to deal with the consortium's unsavory goods. Rejecting the proposal might upset the consortium, but it allows the PCs to show their priorities between conscience and coin.

Trouble: Something's gone wrong with the organization, requiring the PCs' attention or assistance to solve. Perhaps the thieves' guild is dealing with a clever new guard captain and needs help from the PCs to stay safe. Typically the resources the PCs need to invest to solve the troubles should be less than the benefits the PCs gain from windfalls to ensure that the organization is providing a substantial benefit to the PCs, rather than simply evening out.

Windfall: The organization has received an unexpected benefit that helps the PCs. This is typically access to an uncommon option: perhaps the organization researched a new spell or discovered the techniques for an uncommon feat. However, it could be extra money or resources, clues for the PCs' adventures, political prestige, or anything else you can think of. The players might even be able to suggest a few options for their followers and lieutenants to work toward to give you some ideas.

HEXPLORATION

Few activities epitomize adventure as much as pure exploration through an unknown wilderness. Leaving the city streets and trade roads behind and striking out into the unknown can test the mettle of the most experienced adventurers, but such efforts reward those seeking fantastical sites, natural resources, and unforeseen opportunities.

While you can represent long, heroic journeys using normal exploration, if you want something more detailed, you can use the hexploration subsystem instead. This is a method where the overland map is divided into individual hexagonal sections of territory. During their exploration, the PCs travel through and explore individual hexes, finding interesting sites, secrets, resources, and dangers.

The pace of travel is measured in days rather than hours or minutes. This means choosing hexploration activities are more akin to choosing downtime activities than exploration activities. Each day, the PCs explore or travel through a region of the wilderness measured in hexes on a map to survey, discover resources, forage, find sites, and reconnoiter potential foes and allies.

Hexploration is ideal for sandbox-style campaigns, where the players are at liberty to set the course of their own adventure. The GM populates a region with interesting locations and situations that the players explore in any order they see fit.

DESIGNING A HEXPLORATION MAP

The best way to map the area is with a hex grid. Each hex represents a discreet area 12 miles from corner to corner, which can be traveled across and explored in about 1 day even by slower-moving groups. Hexes track the distance the party travels while exploring and define the bounds of certain types of terrain.

When designing your hex map, it's best to have each hex represent one primary terrain type. This doesn't mean that's the only feature of the land in this hex, but it is the predominant type and represents the challenges of traveling across and exploring that hex. You can also give your hex other elements: a river or a road might snake through the area, or it could contain a castle, cave, village, fort, or some other type of encounter setting. You can quickly draw your map using just a few colors, some basic symbols, and letters or numbers for reference.

But this is only the start. This detailed map is your GM map, holding all the secrets for the PCs to discover. Give the players a blank map that they can fill in as they explore the wilderness hex by hex. The more they explore, the more their map will look like yours.

POPULATING HEXES

When populating a hexploration map, keep in mind that you have little control over which areas the players choose to explore first—or if they'll explore those areas at all.

Because hexploration leads to nonlinear, player-guided play, consider providing hooks within encounters and sites for them to explore in several directions from their starting point. You can provide some direction by presenting jobs like exploring a site on behalf of an NPC, escorting travelers, delivering goods, or scouting a region for a local noble. This typically leads to a set encounter (see below).

SET ENCOUNTERS

Even a sandbox adventure has a story or is the setting of multiple stories. Set encounters, be they just a simple encounter or an entire adventuring site, can serve as important beats in the story behind the PCs' exploration. These are typically the points on the hex maps the PCs are searching for, and the discovery of one set encounter will often incorporate story points that lead to the next.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

You can instill additional danger into your hexploration by including random encounters, whether they take the form of interesting features, natural hazards, or creatures native to the terrain. It can help to create a series of short lists in advance, each including a mix of three types of encounters: harmless, hazards, and creature encounters. Then create tables to randomize the results, or simply pick whichever encounter you think would work best for your hexploration narrative when these encounters occur (as described in Random Encounters on page 173). It's often easier to create a list by terrain rather than for each hex. The forest hexes could have their own random encounter list while the plains beyond have a different list, possibly with some overlap.

A harmless encounter is just that: the party is in no danger from it. Harmless encounters can be opportunities to flesh out the world with interesting bits of set-dressing, like a shrine on the side of the road dedicated to a minor god, opportunities for the party to interact with other travelers, or simply interesting or noteworthy moments on the road, like a distant and dazzling electrical storm.

Hazard encounters can include those located in the Hazards section on pages 520–529 of the *Core Rulebook* and pages 77–81 of this book, primarily the environmental hazards and haunts. You can also create your own hazards using the rules found in Building Hazards on page 74.

Creature encounters can use the creatures found in the *Bestiary*, or you can create your own using the rules found in Building Creatures on page 56.

Plan your hazard and monster encounters with a degree of flexibility so you can tailor them to the PCs'



current level, perhaps by creating a lower-level encounter and including notes on how to scale it up. Alternatively, if you want to run a more challenging or open-world hexploration, don't adapt to your players at all. Make a variety of encounters, some of which are so powerful that the correct tactic is to flee. You can even create a chase to make the escape exciting (see Chases on page 156).

TERRAIN

While each hex should have a predominant terrain type, your terrain can come alive using the info in the Environment section on pages 512–519 of the *Core Rulebook*. A hex might also include a river or road. These can cut through the terrain, making it easier for the PCs to travel through the hex, so long as they follow the path. Additionally, each hex might have special features like resources and secrets (see the Types of Terrain sidebar on page 172).

GENERATING RANDOM HEX MAPS

If you'd like to create your map randomly, begin by selecting a hex on a blank map as the starting point. Then decide the type of terrain for that starting point or roll it on Table 3-4: Random Terrain Type. From that point onward, let the players decide which direction they travel. If they enter an unexplored hex, generate that hex by rolling 1d20 on Table 3-4 and Table 3-5: Random Terrain Feature to determine a type and element for that hex.

Apply common sense when producing terrain in this way. Unless magic is involved, it is unlikely a patch of arctic ice would appear in the heart of a desert—though figuring out a way for that to occur could lead to an interesting encounter or subplot later on.

TABLE 3-4: RANDOM TERRAIN TYPE

1d20	Result
1-3	Plains
4-5	Desert
6-7	Aquatic (lake, sea, or ocean)
8-9	Mountain
10-11	Forest
12	Swamp
13	Arctic
14-20	Match the previous hex

TABLE 3-5: RANDOM TERRAIN FEATURE

1d20	Result
1-3	Landmark A feature of some significance that distinguishes the hex as noteworthy.
4-6	Secret The hex contains a secret the party uncovers upon exploring the hex.
7-9	Resource The hex contains some valuable resource appropriate to the terrain.
10-20	Standard A standard representation of the terrain type.



TYPES OF TERRAIN

The following are examples of the types of terrain you can use when creating your hexploration map. Each section provides the difficulty of traversing that terrain (either open, difficult, or greater difficult terrain) and the potential resources and secrets found there.

AQUATIC

Terrain typically requires a boat or a swim speed; depends on the strengths of currents and the weather

Resources seafood, coral, pearls, shipwrecks

Secrets remote islands filled with monsters, isolated communities, pirates, flooded or underwater cities of aquatic creatures

ARCTIC

Terrain typically difficult or greater difficult terrain

Resources scarce food (broken ice floes that allow for fishing, breeding grounds for seals or whales)

Secret thawed passes that allow ship travel, hidden caverns, isolated communities of arctic dwellers

DESERT

Terrain typically difficult or greater difficult terrain

Resources water sources (underground springs, oases, and streams), mineral wealth

Secrets forgotten civilizations beneath the dunes

FOREST

Terrain typically difficult terrain, or greater difficult terrain for a dense jungle

Resources diverse flora and fauna, natural remedies, plentiful game

Secrets bandit encampment, druid's henge, fey-touched glade or mushroom circle

MOUNTAIN

Terrain typically greater difficult terrain, or difficult terrain for hills

Resources minerals (including gold, silver, and gemstones)

Secrets hidden pass, watchtower or waypoint constructed by a nearby empire, dragon's lair, bandit hideout

PLAIN

Terrain open terrain

Resources useful plants (flax or cotton)

Secrets artifacts abandoned after a historic battle, valuables buried by outlaws for later retrieval

SWAMP

Terrain typically greater difficult terrain

Resources materials useful for medicine or poison

Secrets river raider camps, remains and gear of unlucky travelers, sites of mystic significance

RUNNING HEXPLORATION

Once you have your hexploration map ready, it's time for the PCs to start exploring! Each day, the PCs decide how they plan on exploring, either learning more about their current hex or traversing a new hex. They do this by declaring one or more hexploration activities for the day. These activities take two forms: group or individual. The number of hexploration activities a group can accomplish each day is based on the Speed of their slowest member. If a group is willing to split up, faster members can perform more hexploration activities based on their own Speed, but such a decision may be deadly given the threat of random encounters. A group moving at a Speed of 10 feet or less is so slow it can't even traverse an open hex in a single day; it takes such a group 2 days for each hexploration activity.

TABLE 3-6: HEXPLORATION ACTIVITIES PER DAY

Speed	Activities per Day
10 feet or less	1/2
15–25 feet	1
30–40 feet	2
45–55 feet	3
60 feet or more	4

This rate assumes the PCs are taking time to camp and rest at healthy intervals. When a new day of hexploration begins, the group can decide to take a forced march as long as no one in the group is fatigued. Doing so allows them to gain an extra Travel activity (or perform a full Travel activity each day if their Speed is 10 feet or less), but this is the only activity they can perform that day. A character can participate in a forced march safely for a number of days equal to the character's Constitution modifier (minimum 1 day). Any additional days of forced march make the character fatigued until they spend an entire day of downtime resting.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Group activities require the entire party to work together in order to be effective; these activities each count as one of the day's hexploration activities for the whole group. For instance, if the group had 2 hexploration activities per day and decided to Travel and Reconnoiter, no one would have any additional hexploration activities that day. There are two group activities: Travel and Reconnoiter.

TRAVEL

MOVE

You progress toward moving into an adjacent hex. In open terrain, like a plain, using 1 Travel activity allows you to move from one hex to an adjacent hex. Traversing a hex with difficult terrain (such as a typical forest or desert) requires 2 Travel activities, and hexes of greater difficult terrain (such as a steep mountain or typical swamp) require 3 Travel activities to traverse. Traveling along a road uses a terrain type one step better than the surrounding terrain. For example, if you

are traveling on a road over a mountain pass, the terrain is difficult terrain instead of greater difficult terrain.

The Travel activity assumes you are walking overland. If you are flying or traveling on water, most hexes are open terrain, though there are exceptions. Flying into storms or high winds count as difficult or greater difficult terrain. Traveling down a river is open terrain, but traveling upriver is difficult or greater difficult terrain.

RECONNOITER

CONCENTRATION

You spend time surveying and exploring a specific area, getting the lay of the land and looking for unusual features and specific sites. Reconnoitering a single hex takes a number of hexploration activities equal to the number of Travel activities necessary to traverse the hex—1 for open terrain, 2 for difficult terrain, and 3 for greater difficult terrain. Traveling on roads doesn't lessen the time required to Reconnoiter. Once the hex has been Reconnoitered, you can Map the Area to reduce your chance of getting lost in that hex (see below). You automatically find any special feature that doesn't require a check to find, and you attempt the appropriate checks to find hidden special features.

For instance, if you were looking for an obvious rock formation among some hills, you would spend 2 hexploration activities to Reconnoiter the hex, and you'd find the rock formation. But if you were looking for a hidden tengu monastery somewhere in some deep forests, after spending 2 activities to Reconnoiter the forest hex, you would have to succeed at a Perception check as part of your Reconnoiter activity to find the monastery.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES

Not all hexploration activities need to be accomplished as a group. In place of using a hexploration activity to Travel or Reconnoiter, each individual group member can instead perform one of these individual activities.

FORTIFY CAMP

You can spend time fortifying your camp for defense with a successful Crafting check (typically at a trained or expert DC). Anyone keeping watch or defending the camp gains a +2 circumstance bonus to initiative rolls and Perception checks to Seek creatures attempting to sneak up on the camp.

MAP THE AREA

CONCENTRATION

As long as your group has successfully Reconnoitered the hex, you can use this activity to create an accurate map of the hex with a successful Survival check (typically at a trained or expert DC). When you have an accurate map of the hex, the DC of any check to navigate that hex is reduced by 2.

EXISTING ACTIVITIES

Characters can use the Subsist downtime activity, which follows the same rules but assumes they're using it after

8 hours or less of exploration. Any skill feats or other abilities that apply to Subsist normally still apply here. In general, the various exploration activities found in the sidebar on page 498 of the *Core Rulebook* (except Hustle) can be used as individual hexploration activities, as can skill actions in Chapter 4 of the *Core Rulebook*, at the GM's discretion.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

When exploring, there is always a chance the PC will stumble upon random encounters, depending on the terrain. At the start of each day of hexploration, roll a flat check and consult the appropriate terrain type on Table 3-7: Random Encounter Chance. If the flat check is a success, the PCs have a random encounter, and on a critical success, they have two random encounters. Roll on Table 3-8: Random Encounter Type to determine the type of encounter. Once you know the type of the encounter, either choose from the list you made for that region or choose your own.

TABLE 3-7: RANDOM ENCOUNTER CHANCE

Terrain Type	Flat Check DC*
Aquatic	17
Arctic	17
Desert	17
Forest	14
Mountain	16
Plains	12
Swamp	14
* On a road or river, decrease the DC by 2. If PCs are flying, increase the DC by 3, but choose a hazard or monster that is relevant to flying PCs.	

TABLE 3-8: RANDOM ENCOUNTER TYPE

1d10	Encounter
1-5	Harmless
6-7	Hazard
8-10	Creature

SWITCHING OUT OF HEXPLORATION

Most short encounters do not affect the number of hexploration activities that the PCs can perform during the day, but when the PCs take on multiple encounters or engage in activities that take hours rather than minutes, you'll want to deduct the time from their available hexploration activities. For the story's sake, it's best to think of hexploration activities as the various things that the PCs have time to do in the daylight hours. For instance, maybe the group spends 2 of their 3 hexploration activities Reconnoitering a hex, finding a tengu monastery, and learning that it is a sprawling complex underneath a small wooded hill. You might decide that the PCs found it in the evening, and they have the choice between making a foray into the complex late in the day or pursuing some individual activities, camping for the night, and starting off fresh in the morning.

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VEHICLES

A villain on the run steals a carriage and sends the characters on a chase through the city, or the characters find an ancient airship and decide to take it for a spin. Whatever the case, if vehicles are common throughout your world, they're likely to come up in your game. This section provides the tools you'll need when that happens.

Vehicles can play many roles in a game. They might simply be the means by which the party travels from one location to another, determining only the Price to be paid for passage. But a caravan wagon that gets attacked becomes part of an encounter. In a pirate campaign, the ship is both the party's home and its primary weapon.

The majority of the rules in this section are for using vehicles in encounters, but vehicles are also useful during exploration and even downtime play.

VEHICLE BASICS

Ultimately, vehicles are objects. They have object immunities (*Core Rulebook* 273), and they can't act. In addition to the statistics most objects have, vehicles have several additional statistics and abilities. Vehicles have a size like any object, but their spaces are more specifically defined. Vehicles also have specialized movement rules.

SIZE, SPACE, AND CAPACITY

Vehicles have size traits, but they don't occupy the same spaces that most creatures use. Instead, each vehicle has specific dimensions provided in its stat block.

Most vehicles are Large or larger, and many vehicles are made for the purpose of carrying cargo. Unless stated otherwise, the amount of cargo a vehicle can carry depends on its size, terrain, and propulsion. A draft horse or similar creature can usually pull around 100 Bulk of goods consistently throughout the day, so pulled vehicles can typically hold 100 Bulk per Large creature pulling. Water vehicles, such as ships, have limits that are more based on volume than weight; a ship can hold upwards of 1,000 Bulk. Flying vehicles can typically hold only 1/10 the Bulk of a water vehicle and still remain airborne.

MOVEMENT AND HEADING

A vehicle's movement type is determined by the vehicle itself, while its movement each round is based on the pilot's actions. Vehicles trigger reactions when they move, just like a creature does, as do the actions of the pilot and any passengers.

Creatures can rotate and turn freely, so when you play a creature, you usually don't need to keep track of which way it's facing. However, vehicles can't turn on a dime, so when controlling a vehicle, you need to keep track of which direction it's facing. This is called the vehicle's heading.

When a vehicle moves, it must move in the direction of its heading—it can't move backwards or sideways, though it can turn gradually as it moves forward.

Most vehicles can turn up to 90 degrees for every vehicle length they move forward. For example, a 10-foot-long carriage could turn left in only 10 feet. A 100-foot-long warship, however, would need 100 feet to make the same turn; given the warship's 30-foot Speed, turning typically requires several actions' worth of movement.

Some rules specify that a vehicle must move in a straight line. This line is measured from the center of the vehicle's front edge, and it can skew up to 45 degrees from the vehicle's current heading.

When using a vehicle in exploration mode, the vehicle's Speed determines its travel speed just like a creature (for more information, see Table 9–2: Travel Speed on page 479 of the *Core Rulebook*). No Drive actions or piloting checks are necessary to pilot a vehicle at these speeds.

PROPULSION

Vehicles typically travel over land, on water, or through the air, and their Speeds indicate their terrain and movement types. But vehicles also have a form of propulsion—the way in which their movement is powered—and this propulsion often has additional considerations.

There are five main types of propulsion: alchemical, magical, pulled, rowed, and wind. A vehicle can have more than one means of propulsion, though it usually uses only one type of propulsion at a time. For instance, a galley has both the rowed and the wind propulsion traits, meaning it can sail when the winds are favorable, but the crew can also lower the sails and row the ship when necessary. The vehicle's means of propulsion informs the skills a pilot can use for piloting checks (page 175), and some means of propulsion have additional rules.

ALCHEMICAL

Powered by the reactions of alchemical reagents, controlled internal combustion, lighter-than-air gases, or steam, vehicles with alchemical propulsion tend to be powerful but have the potential to be wildly unpredictable. Alchemical vehicles can often be piloted using the Crafting skill.

MAGICAL

Magically propelled vehicles are powered by spells, magic items, or an entirely magical engine. A magical propulsion system can be targeted with counteracting effects like *dispel magic*, using the vehicle's level and a standard DC for that level for the counteract check. A creature can use Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion (depending on the type of magic) for a magical vehicle's piloting checks.

PULLED

This method of propulsion is perhaps the most common, wherein a wheeled conveyance (such as a carriage or wagon) is pulled by one or more creatures. The Speed of the vehicle can never exceed that of the slowest creature pulling the vehicle. The creatures pulling the vehicle don't act on their own; they instead act as part of the vehicle's actions, and their movement as part of those actions triggers reactions just as it does for the vehicle itself and its pilot.

When a pulled vehicle takes collision damage, so do the creatures pulling that vehicle (though they can typically attempt the basic Reflex saving throw to mitigate that damage). The death of one or more pulling creatures might damage or slow the vehicle, and it might cause the pilot to lose control.

For a vehicle pulled by an animal or similarly unintelligent creature, a pilot can use Nature for piloting checks; for sapient pulling creatures, the pilot can instead use Diplomacy or Intimidation for piloting checks.

ROWED

These vehicles are propelled by the power of creatures rowing the vehicle from within. The creatures rowing the vehicle act only as part of the vehicle's actions, and their movement as part of those actions triggers reactions just as it does for the vehicle itself and its pilot (though rowers often have some degree of cover).

When a rowed vehicle takes collision damage, so do the creatures rowing that vehicle (though they can typically attempt the basic Reflex saving throw to mitigate that damage). The death of one or more creatures might cause the vehicle to go out of control or slow the vehicle, but usually doesn't damage the vehicle.

A pilot on a vehicle rowed by other people can use Diplomacy or Intimidation for piloting checks.

WIND

Wind-propelled vehicles require some form of air movement to power them, and adverse wind conditions can cause them to stall or even go out of control. Wind vehicles that rely on cloth sails typically have weakness to fire. Pilots of wind-powered vehicles can use Nature for piloting checks.

PILOTING A VEHICLE

In encounter mode, a vehicle moves on its pilot's turn, and the pilot must use their actions to control it. A vehicle can take part in only 1 move action each round, even if multiple creatures Take Control as pilots on the same round.

VEHICLE MOMENTUM

A vehicle in motion builds up momentum that keeps it in motion. Each round, if the vehicle has moved in the previous round, the pilot must either use another move action or Stop the vehicle. If the pilot does neither of

these things on their turn (even if the pilot Delays), the vehicle continues to move and becomes uncontrolled, as described in Uncontrolled Vehicles on page 176.

PILOTING CHECKS

Many actions related to vehicles call for the pilot to attempt a piloting check. The skills a pilot can use for a piloting check are listed in the vehicle's stat block, but most vehicles use Driving Lore or Piloting Lore along with others determined by their propulsion. The creature piloting a vehicle when an encounter begins can usually roll an appropriate piloting skill for that vehicle for initiative.

The GM sets the DC of the piloting check using a standard DC for the vehicle's level, with adjustments based on the circumstances. Generally speaking, an action that would move a vehicle through difficult terrain increases the DC to a hard DC for its level, and moving through greater difficult terrain increases the DC to incredibly hard. Other factors, such as turbulent winds for a wind-powered vehicle, monsters threatening the creatures pulling a pulled vehicle, or rough seas for a water-based vehicle could all increase the DC of a vehicle's piloting checks.

PILOTING ACTIONS

Characters use the actions listed below to move and interact with vehicles. The effects of the reckless trait appear on page 176.

BOARD ◆**MOVE**

Requirements You are adjacent to a point of entry on the vehicle you are attempting to board.

You board a vehicle through an open top, a door, a portal, or a hatch; if you're already on board, you can instead use this action to disembark into an empty space adjacent to the vehicle's point of entry. Using this action while the vehicle is in motion is challenging, requiring a successful Acrobatics or Athletics check with a DC equal to the vehicle's AC.

DRIVE (VARIES)**MOVE**

Requirements You are piloting a vehicle.

You pilot your vehicle to move. Decide how many actions you intend to spend before you begin Driving. The effects depend on the number of actions you spend. You can't Drive through spaces occupied by creatures, even if they are allies.

- ◆ Attempt a piloting check. On a success, the vehicle moves up to its Speed and can turn normally. On a failure, the vehicle moves its Speed in a straight line. On a critical failure, the vehicle moves its Speed in a straight line and becomes uncontrolled.
- ◆◆ (reckless) The vehicle moves up to twice its Speed in a straight line at the vehicle's current heading.
- ◆◆◆ (reckless) You take a -5 penalty on your piloting check to maintain control of the vehicle. The vehicle moves up to three times its Speed in a straight line at the vehicle's current heading.

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RUN OVER ◆◆◆

MOVE **RECKLESS**

Requirements You are piloting a vehicle.

You try to run over creatures with your vehicle, possibly also ramming one larger creature or object. If you maintain control of your vehicle, the vehicle moves up to twice its Speed in a straight line at the vehicle's current heading. You attempt to run over any creatures in your path two sizes smaller than the vehicle or smaller, and you can attempt to ram one target creature or object in your path one size smaller than the vehicle or larger.

Each creature in your path, including a rammed target, takes the vehicle's collision damage (basic Reflex save at vehicle's collision DC). If the rammed target is a vehicle, its pilot can attempt a piloting check in place of this Reflex save, with the same results. If the target of your ram takes damage, you and your vehicle each take collision damage (no save) and your movement ends.

STOP ◆

MANIPULATE

Requirements You are piloting a vehicle in motion.

You bring the vehicle to a stop.

TAKE CONTROL ◆

MANIPULATE

Requirements You are aboard the vehicle and adjacent to its controls.

You grab the reins, the wheel, or some other mechanism to control the vehicle. Attempt a piloting check; on a success, you become the vehicle's pilot, or regain control of the vehicle if it was uncontrolled. Some vehicles have complicated controls that cause this action to become a multi-action activity.

RECKLESS PILOTING

Actions that have the reckless trait push the pilot and the vehicle beyond the normal parameters for safe operation, and the pilot risks losing control of the vehicle. When performing a reckless action, the pilot must first attempt an appropriate piloting check to keep control of the vehicle, with the following effects. Resolve this piloting check before resolving the action itself.

Success The action occurs as described.

Failure The vehicle moves its Speed in a straight line along its most recent heading, drifting up to 45 degrees at the GM's discretion, and becomes uncontrolled.

UNCONTROLLED VEHICLES

Some situations can cause a pilot to lose control of their vehicle. Most commonly, this is due to a failed piloting check for a reckless action, but it can also occur if a round passes without a pilot using a move action to control the vehicle or Stopping the vehicle. A vehicle can also become uncontrolled if the pilot becomes unable to act during a move action to control the vehicle. For example, if a

vehicle's movement triggers an Attack of Opportunity that knocks the pilot unconscious or paralyzes them, the vehicle becomes uncontrolled.

An uncontrolled vehicle continues to move each round at its most recent pilot's initiative position. The distance it moves each round is 10 feet less than on the previous round, always in a straight line at its current heading until it crashes or it comes to a stop. At your discretion, it could slow down more if it's on uneven terrain, difficult terrain, on an upward slope, or facing adverse wind conditions; by the same token, it could stay at the same speed or even accelerate if it's on a downward slope or being pushed by strong winds.

An uncontrolled vehicle in motion interacts with obstacles, other vehicles, and creatures using the effects of the Run Over action, except that the distance it moves is dictated by the factors above instead of the Speed specified in that action.

VEHICLES IN COMBAT

Whether driving a chariot in an arena or fighting off a boarding party, characters sometimes attack from a vehicle or target other creatures aboard a vehicle. Attacks made while on a vehicle that has moved within the last round take a –2 penalty, or a –4 penalty if the vehicle is uncontrolled or any action in the last round had the reckless trait.

While on a vehicle, a character might have cover from certain angles of attack. A vehicle with sides but no top, such as a chariot or a keelboat, usually provides lesser cover, or standard cover from an attacker on the ground. An enclosed vehicle, such as a carriage, provides greater cover or may prevent attacks entirely. Breaking the vehicle can reduce the cover it provides.

Some vehicles have special mounted weapons that can be used by the pilot or passengers. These are typically ranged weapons, such as a crossbow, and use the same rules as any other weapon, save that they might be able to target only creatures in a certain range or direction.

BROKEN VEHICLES

When a vehicle is broken, it becomes harder to use. It takes a –2 penalty to its AC, saves, and collision DC, and the DC of all piloting checks related to the vehicle increase by 5. The broken vehicle's Speeds are halved.

A vehicle reduced to 0 HP is destroyed, like any other item. If the vehicle is in water when it's destroyed, it sinks; if it is flying, it falls and everyone aboard takes falling damage. A pulled or rowed vehicle that becomes wrecked, regardless of which method of propulsion it's using at the time, deals its collision damage (no saving throw) to the creatures pulling or rowing it, and the creatures may have to be physically freed from the wreckage.

VEHICLE STATISTICS

Vehicles can be as simple as a farmer's cart, or as large and complex as an airship. Whatever the size or complexity of a vehicle, it uses the following stat block format.

GALLOP

Horses and some other creatures have the Gallop action (*Bestiary* 209). When all creatures pulling a vehicle have this action, the pilot can take a –2 circumstance penalty to their piloting check for a 2-action or 3-action Drive to gain the circumstance bonus to Speed from the Gallop action.

VEHICLE NAME

VEHICLE [LEVEL]

SIZE OTHER TRAITS

Price This entry lists the vehicle's Price. This does not include creatures for pulling a vehicle, materials needed to power the vehicle, or the cost of rowers.

Space This entry gives the vehicle's dimensions, not including any creatures pulling the vehicle.

Crew The crew members required to operate the vehicle; **Passengers** the number of passengers the vehicle is typically configured to carry, if any.

Piloting Check This entry lists the skills that can be used for piloting checks while operating the vehicle. Some skills may increase the DC; these list the DC adjustment in parentheses following the skill name.

AC The vehicle's AC; **Saving Throws** The vehicle's saves (typically only Fortitude). If a vehicle needs to attempt a saving throw that isn't listed, the pilot attempts a piloting check at the same DC instead.

Hardness The vehicle's hardness, **HP** The vehicle's Hit Points, with its Broken Threshold in parenthesis; **Immunities** The vehicle's immunities; **Weaknesses** The vehicle's weaknesses, if any; **Resistances** The vehicle's resistances, if any.

Speed The vehicle's Speeds, each followed by the propulsion type for that Speed in parentheses. A pulled vehicle indicates the number and size of the pulling creatures.

Collision The vehicle's collision damage and the DC for saving throws to mitigate that damage. Unless otherwise stated, collisions deal bludgeoning damage. If the vehicle has any other form of attack, like mounted weaponry, they appear in their own entries below this one.

Special Abilities Any abilities unique to the vehicle are listed at the end of the stat block.

SAMPLE VEHICLES

Presented here is a sample of the many vehicles that can be found throughout Golarion.

AIRSHIP

VEHICLE 12

RARE GARGANTUAN

Price 6,000 gp

Space 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, 60 feet high

Crew 1 pilot, 5 other crew; **Passengers** 15

Piloting Check Arcana (DC 32), Crafting (DC 32), Nature (DC 32), or Piloting Lore (DC 30)

AC 28; **Fort** +22

Hardness 20, **HP** 210 (BT 105); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** 15 fire until broken

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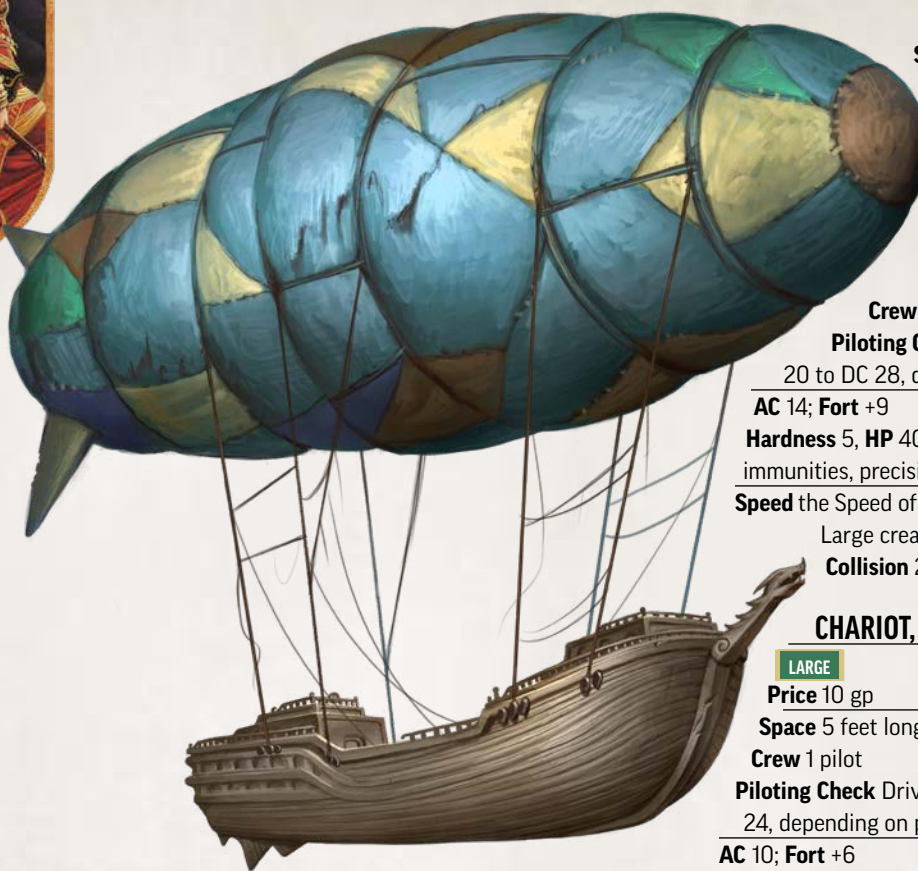
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Speed fly 50 feet (alchemical, magical)
Collision 9d10 (DC 30)
Sluggish This vehicle must move twice its length for each 90-degree turn it makes.

CARRIAGE VEHICLE 2

LARGE
Price 100 gp
Space 10 feet long, 10 feet wide, 7 feet high
Crew 1 pilot; **Passengers** 2
Piloting Check Driving Lore (DC 16) or Nature (DC 18 to DC 26, depending on pulling creature)
AC 13; **Fort** +8
Hardness 5, **HP** 40 (BT 20); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage
Speed the Speed of the slowest pulling creature (pulled by 2 Large creatures)
Collision 2d8 (DC 16)

CART VEHICLE 0

LARGE
Price 3 gp
Space 10 feet long, 5 feet wide, 4 feet high
Crew 1 pilot; **Passengers** 1
Piloting Check Driving Lore (DC 14) or Nature (DC 16 to DC 24, depending on pulling creature)
AC 10; **Fort** +6
Hardness 5, **HP** 14 (BT 7); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Speed the Speed of the pulling creature (pulled by 1 Large creature)
Collision 1d10 (DC 14)

CHARIOT, HEAVY VEHICLE 3

LARGE
Price 150 gp
Space 10 feet long, 10 feet wide, 4 feet high
Crew 1 pilot; **Passengers** 3
Piloting Check Driving Lore (DC 18) or Nature (DC 20 to DC 28, depending on pulling creature)
AC 14; **Fort** +9
Hardness 5, **HP** 40 (BT 20); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage
Speed the Speed of the slowest pulling creature (pulled by 2 Large creatures)
Collision 2d10 (DC 18)

CHARIOT, LIGHT VEHICLE 0

LARGE
Price 10 gp
Space 5 feet long, 5 feet wide, 4 feet high
Crew 1 pilot
Piloting Check Driving Lore (DC 14) or Nature (DC 16 to DC 24, depending on pulling creature)
AC 10; **Fort** +6
Hardness 5, **HP** 14 (BT 7); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage
Speed the Speed of the pulling creature (pulled by 1 Large creature)
Collision 1d12 (DC 14)

GALLEY VEHICLE 10

GARGANTUAN
Price 3,000 gp
Space 130 feet long, 20 feet wide, 25 feet high
Crew 1 pilot, 20 rowers; **Passengers** 6
Piloting Check Sailing Lore (DC 27), Diplomacy (DC 29), or Intimidation (DC 29)
AC 25; **Fort** +19
Hardness 15, **HP** 170 (BT 85); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** 15 fire until broken
Speed swim 30 feet (rowed, wind)
Collision 7d10 (DC 27)
Maneuverable With a full complement of skilled rowers, a rowed galley can turn swiftly, turn in place, and even row backwards. Each 90-degree turn made in less than a vehicle length costs 5 extra feet of movement. It can row backwards no faster than half its speed, and it can't turn while rowing backwards.

GLIDER VEHICLE 0

UNCOMMON **LARGE**
Price 15 gp
Space 5 long, 10 feet wide, 2 feet high
Crew 1 pilot

Piloting Check Piloting Lore (DC 14) or Nature (DC 16)

AC 10; **Fort** +6

Hardness 0, **HP** 16 (BT 8); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** 5 fire

Speed fly 25 feet (wind)

Collision 2d4 (DC 14)

Starting Drop The only way to launch a glider is to jump off a steep incline with favorable wind conditions. The glider is uncontrolled and falls 60 feet each round until the pilot successfully Takes Control. If the glider hits the ground before the pilot successfully Takes Control, the pilot and the glider each take falling damage.

ROWBOAT

VEHICLE 0

MEDIUM

Price 15 gp

Space 10 feet long, 5 feet wide, 3 feet high

Crew 1 pilot; **Passengers** 2

Piloting Check Athletics (DC 16) or Sailing Lore (DC 14)

AC 10; **Fort** +6

Hardness 5, **HP** 16 (BT 8); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Speed swim 20 feet (rowed)

Collision 2d4 (DC 14)

Portaged The rowboat can be carried overland by 2 Medium creatures or 1 Large creature. Those creatures are encumbered when doing so.

SAILING SHIP

VEHICLE 9

GARGANTUAN

Price 2,000 gp

Space 75 feet long, 20 feet wide, 25 feet high

Crew 1 pilot, 8 crew; **Passengers** 10

Piloting Check Sailing Lore (DC 26), Diplomacy (DC 28), or Intimidation (DC 28)

AC 23; **Fort** +18

Hardness 15, **HP** 150 (BT 75); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** 15 fire until broken

Speed swim 40 feet (wind)

Collision 6d10 (DC 26)

Sluggish This vehicle must move twice its length for each 90-degree turn it makes.

SLEIGH

VEHICLE 1

LARGE

Price 50 gp

Space 10 feet long, 5 feet wide, 4 feet high

Crew 1 pilot; **Passengers** 1

Piloting Check Driving Lore (DC 15) or Nature (DC 17 to DC 25, depending on pulling creature)

AC 11; **Fort** +7

Hardness 5, **HP** 18 (BT 9); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Speed the Speed of the slowest pulling creature (pulled by 2 Large creatures or 6 Medium creatures)

Collision 2d6 (DC 15)

Ice Traverser Ice and snow are not difficult terrain to a sleigh, but all other terrains are difficult terrain for it.

Sluggish This vehicle must move twice its length for each 90-degree turn it makes.

STEAM GIANT

VEHICLE 14

RARE HUGE

Price 12,500 gp

Space 20 feet long, 20 feet wide, 25 feet high

Crew 1 pilot, 3 crew; **Passengers** 4


Piloting Check Driving Lore (DC 32) or Crafting (DC 34)

AC 33; **Fort** +28

Hardness 20, **HP** 200 (BT 100); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Speed 20 feet (alchemical)

Collision 10d10 (DC 29)

Flame Jet  (fire) Two crew members each perform a 3-action activity on their turn to produce a gout of flames that erupts at the end of the second character's turn from any corner of any space the steam giant occupies. The flames deal 6d8 fire damage to each creature in a 30-foot cone (DC 32 basic Reflex save). The flame jet stops working if the steam giant is broken.

WAGON

VEHICLE 1

LARGE

Price 25 gp

Space 10 feet long, 10 feet wide, 7 feet high

Crew 1 pilot; **Passengers** 2

Piloting Check Driving Lore (DC 15) or Nature (DC 17 to DC 25, depending on the pulling creature)

AC 11; **Fort** +7

Hardness 5, **HP** 18 (BT 9); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Speed the Speed of the slowest pulling creature (pulled by 2 Large creatures)

Collision 2d6 (DC 15)





CHAPTER 4: VARIANT RULES

While the rules presented in the Core Rulebook are designed to give you and your group a baseline experience that's easy to learn and fun to play, sometimes you're looking for more customizable options. That's where variant rules come in: options to alter the game's rules to fit your needs. This chapter adds a collection of variant rules to your toolbox, often with additional options for how to use them.

Most of the variant rules in this chapter involve characters, how they progress, and how those pieces fit together. The variants included in this chapter are divided into the following sections.

- **Ability Score Variants** (page 182) includes an alternate ability score system that works entirely through Ability Points, plus ways to distribute what each ability score impacts more evenly.
- **Alignment Variants** (page 184) contains options for removing alignment and an incremental alignment system.
- **Deep Backgrounds** (page 186) replace simply selecting a background with a series of steps that flesh out more of the character's backstory.
- **Feats and Features** (page 192) shows how to build characters who gain feats and class features in different ways, from dual-classed characters with all the options of two classes to characters with a free archetype or more ancestry feats.
- **Level 0 Characters** (page 195) can play through the characters' adventures before they take on character classes.
- **Magic Item Variants** (page 196) contains rules deconstructing the magic item bonuses, allowing you to progress them automatically or via craftsmanship to more easily run a lower-magic game.
- **Proficiency without Level** (page 198) changes the fundamental math of the proficiency system to tell stories where being outnumbered by weaker foes remains a challenge and high-level characters are less superhuman.
- **Skill Points** (page 199) offers a more granular system for characters to choose and hone their skills.
- **Stamina** (page 200) grants characters a pool of Stamina Points that they lose before Hit Points and can recover with by resting to catch their breath.

CHOOSING VARIANT RULES

When you and your group are deciding which variant rules to use, think about the types of stories you want to tell together, including the genre, themes, and characters, and use that information to choose which variant rules might be the best fit. If different players think different variant options would work best for the game, let each of them make their point, but ultimately you as the GM make the final call.

You might discover that your game requires variant rules beyond those listed here—and that's okay! In fact, it's to be expected. Use these options as a starting point for some of the most commonly helpful tools, but you and your group should work together to build your own variant rules whenever you want a different experience. Don't be afraid to deviate from the baseline—you and your group know what you like and what you're looking for better than a baseline rules set ever could. More about creating your own house rules can be found on page 29.

If you're not sure about a variant rule, take a chance! Make sure everyone in your group understands that this is a trial run and that you might need to adjust or remove the variant rules later on if they're causing unexpected side effects or not working as you intended. When you're playing with variant rules, be sure to let any new players who join the group know about the variant rules your group has chosen. This helps them set their expectations and ensures they don't feel ambushed by any variant rules the first time they're encountered in the game, which is important for making sure there is a feeling of fairness among your players.

COMBINING VARIANTS

If your group is playing a game with themes that call for it, you might wind up combining multiple variant rules together, possibly applying several options at the same time. For instance, in a gritty, low-magic, survival-horror game, you might start the PCs as 0-level characters, remove alignment to allow more shades of gray, alter the proficiency bonus progression to remove level, and remove magic items—all at the same time. In general, the variant options in this chapter are sufficiently self-contained, with explanations of how they change the game, that you should be able to combine them without trouble. When you design your own variant rules, be on the lookout for places where new rules might have unexpected overlapping effects on each other and the game.

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ABILITY SCORE VARIANTS

The default method of generating ability scores in the Core Rulebook can help you learn your character's story along the way, while the alternative method, rolling scores, is a nod to tradition. But other ways to generate ability scores might better suit the story you want to tell.

GRADUAL ABILITY BOOSTS

In this variant, a character gains ability boosts more gradually as they level up, rather than receiving four ability boosts at 5th, 10th, 15th, and 20th levels. Each character gains one ability boost when they reach each of 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th levels. These are collectively a single set of ability boosts, so a character can't boost the same ability score more than once per set; players can put a dot next to each boosted ability score or otherwise mark it to keep track. PCs also receive an ability boost at 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th level (a second set); at 12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th level (a third set); and at 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th level (the fourth and final set).

This spreads out the ability boosts, and using them earlier means a character can increase their most important ability modifiers at a lower level. This makes characters slightly more powerful on average, but it makes levels 5, 10, 15, and 20 less important since characters usually choose the least important ability boost of the set at those levels.

POINT BUY

This alternative ability score generation method replaces ability boosts and flaws with a number of Ability Points. Players determine their ability scores by investing Ability Points into each score, as seen in Table 4-1: Cost for an Ability Score. These give players more customization in their ability scores and can allow a player to really prioritize their favorite ones, but the system is significantly more complicated to use.

STEP 1: DECREASE STARTING SCORES

All of a character's ability scores start at 10. If the PC's ancestry has ability flaws, decrease those ability scores to 8. A player can also voluntarily lower any ability score to below 10 to gain more Ability Points to use in Step 2. They gain 1 Ability Point for lowering an ability score to 9, or 2 Ability Points for lowering a score to 8.

STEP 2: SPEND POINTS

Now that each player has set their minimum scores, they'll spend Ability Points to increase their ability scores. Ability Points come in two categories: dedicated and flexible. Dedicated Ability Points can be spent only on specified ability scores, but flexible Ability Points can be used to increase any scores. These Ability Points replace all the ability boosts a character would normally get.

The total number of Ability Points spent determines the character's starting ability score, as shown on Table 4-1:

Cost for an Ability Score. The maximum score a player can buy at character creation is 18. Raising a score costs 2 points more than the listed value if the score started at an 8 after Step 1, or 1 point more if the score started at a 9. Any Ability Points not spent during character creation are lost.

- **Dedicated Ability Points:** A character gets 2 dedicated Ability Points for each ability score their ancestry gives predetermined ability boosts to. Human characters, or those with another ancestry that grants two free ability boosts, get 2 more flexible Ability Points instead. Each character also gets 2 dedicated Ability Points for one of their background's choices of predetermined ability scores, and 2 dedicated Ability Points for their class's key ability score.
- **Flexible Ability Points:** Each character gets 15 flexible Ability Points, plus any gained for voluntarily lowering ability scores below 10 in Step 1.

TABLE 4-1: COST FOR AN ABILITY SCORE

Total Ability Points Spent	Ability Score
-2	8
-1	9
0	10
1	11
2	12
3	13
5	14
7	15
10	16
13	17
17	18

INCREASING SCORES AT HIGHER LEVELS

When a character levels up, they gain Ability Points at each level, as shown on Table 4-2: Ability Points Gained. Unlike the Ability Points from character creation, a player can save these to buy a more expensive increase, and they can increase ability scores to a maximum of 22. When a player is ready to increase one or more ability scores, they spend the number of Ability Points listed on Table 4-3: Raising an Ability Score and increase the ability score accordingly. A player can increase a score more than once at a given time, but they must pay for each increase individually, such as going from 14 to 16 by spending 2 points to increase from 14 to 15, and then 3 points to increase from 15 to 16. For most games, it's best to increase scores when leveling up, between game sessions, or during downtime.

Apex items work as described in the *Core Rulebook*. They can increase an ability score to a maximum of 24.

TABLE 4-2: ABILITY POINTS GAINED

Level	Ability Points Gained
1	Starting points
2	2
3	2
4	2
5	2
6	3
7	3
8	3
9	3
10	3
11	4
12	4
13	4
14	4
15	4
16	5
17	5
18	5
19	5
20	5

TABLE 4-3: RAISING AN ABILITY SCORE

Current Ability Score	Cost to Raise by 1
8	1
9	1
10	1
11	1
12	1
13	2
14	2
15	3
16	3
17	4
18	5
19	6
20	7
21	8

EXAMPLE

Merisiel is an elven rogue with the criminal background. She starts with 10 in all ability scores and reduces her Constitution to 8 for being an elf. She decides to voluntarily lower her Strength and Intelligence to 8 each, gaining 4 flexible Ability Points. She has now set her minimum scores: Str 8, Dex 10, Con 8, Int 8, Wis 10, and Cha 10.

In Step 2, she starts by determining how many points she has to spend. She gains 2 dedicated Ability Points in Intelligence and Dexterity for being an elf, 2 in Dexterity for being a criminal, and 2 more in Dexterity for being a rogue. She also has 19 flexible points to spend: 15 plus 4 for the two ability scores she voluntarily lowered to 8.

Merisiel purchases an 18 in Dexterity, which costs her the 6 dedicated Ability Points plus 11 flexible Ability Points. Spending her 2 dedicated Ability Points in Intelligence

brings her to a 10, which she's happy with. She now has 8 flexible Ability Points left. She's worried she'll be too frail with a Constitution score of only 8, so she spends 4 flexible Ability Points to increase it to 12, leaving her with 4 Ability Points left over. Finally, she raises Wisdom and Charisma each to 12 because it's inexpensive but still grants her bonuses; this uses all her Ability Points, leaving her with Str 8, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12.

When she reaches 2nd level, she gains 2 Ability Points. She decides to save these until 3rd level, when she gains 2 more. She then spends 3 of her 4 Ability Points to raise her Constitution from 12 to 14. She then saves up for more Dexterity, gaining 2 Ability Points each at 4th and 5th levels, then 3 each at 6th and 7th levels. She spends all 11 Ability Points at 7th level to gain a 20 in Dexterity! Unless it helps her to have an odd score (for example, to satisfy a feat prerequisite), it's usually best to wait until she has enough Ability Points that increasing a score will increase her modifier—just in case she changes her mind.

ALTERNATIVE SCORES

The classic ability scores aren't of equal value in the rules. Dexterity, Constitution, and Wisdom tend to be more important unless a character requires a particular ability score from among the other three for a specific purpose. If you'd prefer ability scores to all be of roughly equivalent value in character building, this variant creates six ability scores that are in much closer balance with each other.

Make the following changes.

- **Strength** does everything that both Strength and Constitution do in the *Core Rulebook*, and Constitution is gone. A character uses their Strength for melee weapon and unarmed attack rolls, damage rolls, Athletics, Hit Points, Fortitude saves, and so on.
- **Dexterity** splits into two ability scores. The first, still called Dexterity, represents manual dexterity and applies to ranged weapon and unarmed attack rolls, attack and damage rolls with finesse attacks (if better than Strength), and Thievery checks. Agility, which represents footwork, applies to Armor Class, Reflex saves, Acrobatics checks, and Stealth checks.
- **Charisma** applies to Will saves instead of Wisdom.
- **Wisdom** is otherwise unchanged.
- **Intelligence** is unchanged.

You'll need a small number of gameplay tweaks. *Anklets of alacrity* become an Agility apex item, both the *belt of giant strength* and *belt of regeneration* become Strength apex items, and so on. The rogue's thief racket is obsolete, so you might allow rogues to choose a different racket but still gain Thievery. For anything else that references an ability score, such as feats with a Dexterity prerequisite, decide with you group whether Dexterity or Agility makes more sense as the prerequisite. For instance, Agility would make sense for Feather Step since that feat involves footwork. Prewritten NPCs and monsters can just use their Dexterity modifier when their Agility modifier is necessary.

ALIGNMENT VARIANTS

The alignment system has a long history in roleplaying games, and it helps define several aspects of Pathfinder's worlds and characters. Yet it doesn't work well for all games or groups. Altering or removing it offers new opportunities for your game.

Pathfinder's alignment system summarizes a character's ideals, signals that some of the players' opponents are despicable villains, and establishes that truly evil monsters exist. The alignment system can trouble some players because it doesn't simulate the nuance and complexity of real-world moral issues, which are often not so easily categorized. What is considered "good" may be heavily influenced by societal norms or religious beliefs. It's not hard to find two kind, generous people who hold starkly differing interpretations of what good is in specific situations. The variant alignment ideas below provide examples of other options and can serve as inspiration for your own games.

MINOR CHANGES

If you want to keep parts of the existing alignment system, you can use either of the following variants to make changes without entirely removing or replacing alignment. Alignment-based effects still exist in both of these variants, but they might not be as useful as in standard Pathfinder.

EXTREME GOOD AND EVIL

In this variant, some creatures exemplify the concepts of extreme good and evil by their very nature. Only fiends, celestials, and other residents of aligned Outer Sphere planes have an alignment. Remove most alignment restrictions—such as the cleric and champion restrictions—but not ones related to those extraplanar creatures. Replace the removed restrictions with appropriate anathema if necessary.

INCREMENTAL ALIGNMENT

Changing character alignment can be extremely dramatic under the *Core Rulebook* rules. Sometimes, this comes as a surprise to the player, as they find out they and the GM had differing ideas on how their acts impact alignment. The incremental alignment variant breaks each axis of alignment into seven steps that reflect how close a character is to shifting alignments.

This lets you and the player better understand where the character falls, and it allows a player who wants to play a

character living on the edge between alignments to see that represented in the rules. This is not meant to be a highly granular system or one a player can exploit by repeatedly making trivial gestures toward a given alignment. It's meant to indicate the trends of a character's behavior and foreshadow any alignment change that might occur over time. It's typically harder to reach the ends of the scale through minor acts, especially for the evil versus good axis. A character who commits multiple minor acts toward an alignment might shift one step, but it would take a truly reprehensible act to shift them fully to evil all at once—and to recover it could take a long-term atonement and commitment to good.

If a rule depends on a character's alignment, disregard the "fully" and "somewhat" distinctions. A *protection* spell keyed against evil works against both somewhat and fully evil characters. However, some spells, like *detect alignment*, might give more precise information.

MAJOR CHANGES

These two variants massively change how the alignment system works. In fact, one removes it entirely!

NO ALIGNMENT

The simplest variant is to not use the alignment system at all. To many players, this feels like the variant closest to real-world morality. Creatures, NPCs, and players have complex and many-layered beliefs and motivations, just like humans in the real world. Not using the alignment system simultaneously embraces complexity and variance in what is seen as moral behavior. For example, worshippers of a powerful sun god might feel that spreading their deity's light is virtuous behavior. Some might go so far as to say this means they should conquer their neighbors in order to achieve this. Another example might be a large and powerful government placing safety and security as its foremost concern, drawing the conclusion that it's acceptable to sacrifice some individual liberties in favor of increasing the safety of its citizens.

TABLE 4-4: CHANGING ALIGNMENT

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
FULLY LAWFUL	SOMEWHAT LAWFUL	SOMEWHAT NEUTRAL	FULLY NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT CHAOTIC	FULLY CHAOTIC
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
FULLY GOOD	SOMEWHAT GOOD	SOMEWHAT NEUTRAL	FULLY NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT EVIL	FULLY EVIL

MORAL INTENTIONS

In this variant, every character, NPC, and monster selects one or more closely held beliefs, intentions, or loyalties. Simple statements about a character's intentions, like the examples listed in the sidebar, flesh out characters and enliven roleplaying scenes. This system requires some back-and-forth between the GM and the other players, and more thought on the part of everyone at the table.

Typically, specifying three intentions or loyalties works well to define a character. These personal intentions cover broad spectra of behavior and in large part define the subjective definition of good for that individual. Intentions could be as abstract as acting with honor or as concrete as devotion to the character's mother. A person following their core beliefs or intentions feels like they are acting in a good manner, and they are likely to view actions against or restrictions to these beliefs as evil. For example, a character who believes strongly in the law would see allowing a crime to go unpunished as evil.

A specific individual will likely have different levels of commitment for each of their intentions. Determine a relative order of commitment by considering what the character would do if these intentions came into conflict.

EXAMPLE MORAL INTENTIONS

- I will never let my companions down.
- I will avenge my family.
- I will protect the natural world.
- I will achieve great wealth.
- I will spread the word of my deity.
- I will help others in need.
- I will spread the rule of the rightful government.

RULES ADJUSTMENTS

Alignment restrictions no longer exist in either major variant. You can replace them with edicts and anathema, if necessary, and make the following other adjustments.

ALIGNED DAMAGE

If you're using the no alignment variant, remove or replace aligned damage (chaotic, evil, good, and lawful damage), which requires significant adjustments for creatures like angels and devils that were built with a weakness to aligned damage. One option is to replace them one-for-one with new damage types like "radiant" and "shadow" that don't have any moral assumptions. Another option is to simply change the damage type needed for creature weaknesses to some other damage type on a case-by-case basis. A third option is to remove the weaknesses, reduce the monsters' maximum Hit Points, and call it good. No matter what you do with creatures, you'll also have to replace abilities like the champion's that deal aligned damage in a similar way, or remove those abilities.

If you're using the moral intentions variant, you can replace chaotic, evil, good, and lawful damage with a single type of damage called aligned damage, which harms those with intentions directly opposed to those held by the character, as determined by you as GM.

DETECTION

Alignment-detecting effects don't exist. In the moral intentions variant, you might replace such an ability with one that detects whether a creature is following its own intentions, or to detect others with similar intentions to the creature using the ability.

TRAITS

Alignment traits don't exist, and anything that has those traits loses them. Effects that require the traits to function, like *protection*, don't exist.



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DEEP BACKGROUNDS

The decision of a character background is not necessarily a complicated one; the player simply selects from the available background options to reflect their character's life before adventuring. While this is a good method for determining a character's backstory, some players might want more insight into their character's early life or family.

USING DEEP BACKGROUNDS

This variant replaces Step 4 of Character Creation (*Core Rulebook* page 25). The player rolls on the tables in this section to determine their character's family background, homeland, major childhood event, influential associate,

relationships, and drawbacks. Each element of the player's background adds options to the final list of ability boosts, skills, feats, and other options that their background can grant. The player writes these options down as they build their character's background. At the end of the process, they select the following from among the options written down.

- Two ability boosts, each to a different ability score.
- Training in a Lore skill.
- One skill feat (or possibly another feat or piece of equipment). If the player chooses a skill feat, they become trained in its prerequisite skill, or one of its possible prerequisite skills if it has multiple (such as Quick Identification). If the random results include a feat that isn't a skill feat and the player selects that feat, they don't gain training in a skill. If they choose a piece of equipment instead of a skill feat, the entry indicates what skill training, if any, they receive.

REROLLING AND SELECTING

At your discretion, the players don't have to be bound by any results from the following tables. Depending on how your group wants to use deep backgrounds, players can reroll any result they don't like, or even select a specific option from a table that fits their emerging vision of their character. However, if you allow players to reroll or directly select options (and potentially even if you don't), you might want to exclude options that grant feats other than skill feats; these options are unusual enough that they might put too much pressure on players to select only these options. Note that the following tables reflect the *Core Rulebook* and the Age of Lost Omens setting—if your game takes place in a different setting, feel free to adjust the tables or allow players to select the options that best fit your setting.

GENERATING DEEP BACKGROUNDS

As a player, follow the steps below to generate your character's deep background.

STEP 1: FAMILY BACKGROUND

The word family means something different to everyone. You might have a biological family, adopted family, step-family, or any other kind and combination you choose; family bonds come in all types. To determine the number of family members you grew up with as an active part of your life, roll 1d% on the following table. Use the medium family for most ancestries, small if you're a half-elf or half-orc, and large if you're a goblin or halfling. For ancestries other than



those in the *Core Rulebook*, use the column that best suits the ancestry. It's up to you whether these family members are parents, siblings, grandparents, or other close relatives.

TABLE 4-5: FAMILY SIZE

d%	Small Family	Medium Family	Large Family
1-4	0	0	0
5-8	0	0	1
9-20	0	0	2
21-34	0	1	3
35-39	1	2	3
40-50	1	2	4
51-60	2	3	4
61-65	2	3	5
66-69	2	4	5
70-78	3	4	5
79-80	4	4	6
81-87	4	5	6
88-90	5	5	6
91-93	5	6	7
94-95	6	6	7
96-97	6	7	7
98-99	7	7	8+
100	8+	8+	8+

- If you grew up with no family, you had to learn to survive on your own. Add a Strength ability boost and a Constitution ability boost to your options.
- If you grew up with one or two family members, your closeness to them made you highly aware of their feelings, and you. Add an Intelligence ability boost and a Wisdom ability boost to your options.
- If you grew up with three or more family members, you had to mediate family conflicts and negotiate a crowded home. Add a Charisma ability boost and a Dexterity ability boost to your options.

STEP 2: HOMELAND

Where you grew up is highly formative. Roll on the following table to determine the nature of your homeland. If your character is a dwarf, subtract 3; if an elf, add 2; if a goblin, subtract 4. For ancestries other than those in the *Core Rulebook*, apply a modifier that best suits the ancestry, if needed. Work with your GM to flesh your homeland out in further detail. With any of these options, you add a Lore skill based on your homeland's terrain to your background options, such as Forest Lore for a wooded frontier or Absalom Lore if you grew up in that city.

TABLE 4-6: HOMELAND

1d20	Result
1 or less	Underground You grew up in a partly or wholly underground region, such as a human mining town, a goblin warren, or a dwarf-held cavern. Add Engineering Lore, Labor Lore, and Mining Lore to your background options.

- 2-3 **Frontier** You grew up at the edge of a settled region. This might have been isolated hills if you are a dwarf, a ranch or farm if you are a human, or another similar frontier. Add Farming Lore, Fishing Lore, Hunting Lore, Scouting Lore, and Lore pertaining to a type of creature that threatened your homeland regularly (such as Giant Lore) to your background options.
- 4-5 **Trade Town** People frequently passed through your homeland. You might have been raised near a major thoroughfare or crossroads, or in a small trade town. Add Accounting Lore, Guild Lore, Mercantile Lore, Stabling Lore, and Lore of a common ancestry (such as Dwarf Lore) to your background options.
- 6-7 **Simple Village** You were raised in a sleepy village such as a bucolic gnome hamlet, a close-knit human town, or an established goblin fort. Add Herbalism Lore, Midwifery Lore, Milling Lore, Tanning Lore, and Lore of a type of food, drink, or product the village was known for producing (such as Alcohol Lore or Wagon Lore) to your background options.
- 8-9 **Cosmopolitan City** You were raised in a community where no single ancestry predominated. This might have created tensions, but the community might also have pulled together from diverse foundations. Add Art Lore, Guild Lore, Legal Lore, and Underworld Lore to your background options.
- 10-11 **Metropolis** You grew up in one of the largest cities in the world, such as Absalom or Westcrown. Add Architecture Lore, Gladiatorial Lore, Guild Lore, Legal Lore, and Theater Lore to your background options.
- 12 **Front Lines** You grew up in a homeland torn by war. Even if you didn't personally participate, it was never far away. Add Heraldry Lore, Scouting Lore, and Warfare Lore to your background options.
- 13-14 **Itinerant** You never had a single place to call home. You might have been part of a nomadic caravan, a traveling group of entertainers, or a smuggling ring. Add Circus Lore, Fortune-Telling Lore, Games Lore, Labor Lore, and Underworld Lore to your background options.
- 15 **Another Ancestry's Settlement** Randomly determine another common ancestry; you grew up surrounded by that ancestry. Reroll on this table (with a modifier for the new ancestry, if applicable) to determine the type of community in which you grew up (for example, if your gnome grew up among dwarves and rolls a 3, they grew up underground). Add the Adopted Ancestry feat and the Lore skill related to your adopted ancestry (such as Dwarf Lore) to your background options. If you select this feat instead of a skill feat, you aren't trained in a background skill.
- 16 **Coastal Community** You grew up along a wide river, in a wetland, beside an ocean, or on an island. Add Fishing Lore, Sailing Lore, and Lore of a specific type of sea creature (such as Shark Lore) to your background options.

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- 17–18 **Religious Community** You were raised in a community of religious scholars, such as the town around an abbey, a remote elven forest shrine, or a dwarven temple-city. Add Art Lore, Scribing Lore, Lore about a deity that was the focus or enemy of your community (such as Pharasma Lore), and Lore about a plane (other than the Material Plane) where that deity resides to your background options.
- 19+ **Academic Community** You were raised in or near a university, academy, or other center of learning. Add Academia Lore, Genealogy Lore, Library Lore, and Scribing Lore to your background options.

STEP 3: MAJOR CHILDHOOD EVENT

During your childhood, you were influenced by a significant event that helped shape the person you became. Roll on the table below to determine the type of event that shaped you.

TABLE 4-7: MAJOR CHILDHOOD EVENT

1d20	Result
1	Abandoned in a Distant Land Due to some mischance (such as wandering off while on a trip or being press-ganged onto a seagoing ship), you had to survive in a distant land for a while. Add the Multilingual skill feat to your background options.
2	Academy Trained You attended an academy where you studied a number of topics and skills. Whether you were a studious pupil or a dropout, the academy was your home for a good portion of your formative years. Add the Additional Lore skill feat to your background options. If you select Additional Lore as your skill feat, instead of becoming trained in Lore, you become trained in your choice of Arcana, Occultism, or Society.
3	Attained a Magical Gift When you were a child, you found, stole, or were given a magic item that gave you an extraordinary ability. Add the Arcane Sense skill feat to your background options.
4	Betrayed A friend or family member whom you trusted more than anyone else betrayed you. Add the Lie to Me skill feat to your background options.
5	Bullied In your early life, you were often picked on. The callousness of bullies sharpened your resolve to stand up for yourself and others. Add the Intimidating Glare skill feat to your background options.
6	Captured by Giants You were captured by marauding giants and fought your way free. Add the Titan Wrestler skill feat to your background options.
7	Claimed an Inheritance You were bequeathed great wealth or property at an early age. You retained some of it; add a piece of common adventuring gear worth 15 gp or less to your background options. If you select it instead of a skill feat, you are trained in Society.
8	Died You died or came so close that you walked the boundary between life and death. Add the Diehard feat to your background options. If you select it instead of a skill feat, you aren't trained in a background skill.

- 9 **Fell In with a Bad Crowd** In your youth, you ran with a criminal element: a gang, thieves' guild, or similar organization. Add the Experienced Smuggler skill feat to your background options.
- 10 **Had an Ordinary Childhood** Your childhood was fairly ordinary, with no major catastrophe—a stark contrast to most adventurers. Add the Assurance skill feat for a skill of your choice to your background options.
- 11 **Had Your First Kill** You've had blood on your hands since your youth, when you first took the life of another. You still have the weapon you used for the deed; add a common weapon worth 15 gp or less to your background options. If you select this option instead of a skill feat, you are trained in Athletics.
- 12 **Kidnapped** You were kidnapped at some point in your childhood and had to escape, perhaps by pirates, slavers, a cult, or someone else. Add the Quick Squeeze skill feat to your background options.
- 13 **Lost in the Wilderness** Whether lured to the wilderness by a malevolent force or simply lost, you had to survive on your own for a while. Add the Survey Wildlife skill feat to your background options.
- 14 **Met a Fantastic Creature** When you were a child, you made contact with a magical creature, such as a dragon, unicorn, genie, pixie, or similar creature. Add the Recognize Spell skill feat to your background options.
- 15 **Raided** A horde of raiders attacked your settlement and killed and wounded several of your people. This could have been a band of highway robbers or a conquering army. You have a relic from those times; add an armor or shield worth 15 gp or less to your background options. If you select this option instead of a skill feat, you are trained in Medicine.
- 16 **Robbed** Your family's possessions were stolen, and you vowed to catch the next burglar in the act. Add the Snare Crafting skill feat to your background options.
- 17 **Survived a Disaster** You witnessed and survived a major disaster in your childhood years—such as a great fire, flood, earthquake, volcano, or storm—by relying on what was at hand. Add the Quick Repair skill feat to your background options.
- 18 **Trained by a Mentor** A mentor or patron took an interest in your development and volunteered to train or sponsor you. Add the Experienced Professional skill feat to your background options.
- 19 **Witnessed War** You grew up against the backdrop of a major military conflict that affected much of your childhood world. Add the Battle Medicine skill feat to your background options.
- 20 **Won a Competition** You distinguished yourself at an early age when you won a competition. This might have been a martial contest of arms, a showing of apprentice magicians, high-stakes gambling, or something more mundane, like an eating contest. Add the Fascinating Performance skill feat to your background options.



STEP 4: INFLUENTIAL ASSOCIATE

You may have had several people who played key roles in developing their skills and personality, but one likely stands out as the most influential. Use one of the results below as a template to develop an NPC in deeper detail. Work with your GM to determine the current fate of this NPC and whether you can still call upon the NPC for aid.

TABLE 4-8: INFLUENTIAL ASSOCIATE

1d20	Result
1	The Academic One of your associates had a thirst for knowledge that could never be satisfied with simple answers. Through this association, you developed a keen appreciation for numbers, geometry, logic, hard study, and problem-solving. Add an Intelligence ability boost to your background options.
2	The Boss You once gained employment under a powerful individual with far-reaching influence. When the boss spoke up, everyone listened. This could have been a military commander, village leader, guild head, or gang boss. From the boss, you learned how to make people listen and keep them in line. Add a Charisma ability boost to your background options.
3	The Champion You were close to someone who excelled at athletic endeavors and tests of strength or skill. Through your friendship or rivalry, you

developed a competitive spirit that continues to drive you in everything you do. Add a Strength ability boost to your background options.

- 4 **The Confidante** You could tell this person anything. They know your deepest secrets and vulnerabilities just as you know theirs, and thinking critically about another's perspective became second nature to you. Add an Intelligence ability boost to your background options.
- 5 **The Crafter** One of your major influences cherished perfection through art. From this person, you developed a disciplined mind, a solitary focus, and the ability to create something useful and beautiful. Add an Intelligence ability boost to your background options.
- 6 **The Criminal** One of your associates committed crimes regularly. They regaled you with many stories of daring robberies and break-ins—perhaps even murders. You learned what you know of the criminal element from this friend. Add a Dexterity ability boost to your background options.
- 7 **The Dead One** One of your greatest influences was a sapient undead creature, such as a ghost, lich, graveknight, or vampire. Through this strange relationship, you learned of its mortal life, giving you perspective on your own life. Add a Constitution ability boost to your background options.



- 8 **The Fiend** You dealt with, or were possessed by, a fiend who lent you power at a time of great need. Some part of it remains inside you, influencing you toward destructive ends. Add a Strength ability boost to your background options.
- 9 **The Fool** One of your close associates mocked propriety and custom, engaging in wild and somewhat random actions from time to time. After a while, you learned there was simple wisdom to this foolery—a careless worldview that taught you to cast off concern. Add a Wisdom ability boost to your background options.
- 10 **The Hunter** This person was a lone wolf who cautiously allowed you to become a member of their solitary pack. They taught you how to remain quick and thrive on your own in spite of natural dangers. Add a Dexterity ability boost to your background options.
- 11 **The Liege Lord** You became close with someone you were bound to serve, be it an employer, minor lord or lady, or even a king or queen. Though this person held power over you, they held you closer than a subject or servant. As a result, you're used to dealing with and being close to power. Add a Charisma ability boost to your background options.
- 12 **The Lover** You had a romantic connection in your past, and this person deeply influenced your personality. Perhaps this was a first love, a casual partner you grew close to, or the one who got away. The experience bolstered your confidence in romantic interactions, even though your thoughts still stray toward that special someone from long ago. Add a Charisma ability boost to your background options.
- 13 **The Mentor** You had a mentor who taught you everything worth knowing about life. This could have been the person who taught you your heroic abilities, or simply a kindred spirit who helped form your worldview. Add a Constitution ability boost to your background options.
- 14 **The Mercenary** With this person, there was always a cost. No deed came without a trade for something of equal or greater value. You respected their cynical but fair dealings, and they influenced your philosophy. Add a Strength ability boost to your background options.
- 15 **The Mystic** You were especially close to a holy person in your community who fundamentally changed your life, opening your eyes to the incredible powers that exist beyond the natural world. Regardless of whether you now follow a faith, certain religious artifacts, rituals, and texts played a large part in making you the person you are. Add a Wisdom ability boost to your background options.
- 16 **The Pariah** You met a disgraced exile and found in their words something that spoke to you. What once seemed true in your religion, society, or family began to appear false, and you quickly learned not to trust everyone you meet. Add a Wisdom ability boost to your background options.

- 17 **The Relative** You were especially close to a specific relative growing up. To you, this person was the meaning of family. They helped shepherd you into adulthood, teaching you everything you know about the world. You resolutely strive to keep a promise, vow, or oath that you made to them. Add a Constitution ability boost to your background options.
- 18 **The Seer** You were close to a person who claimed to see the future—perhaps an oracle, seer, prophet, or merely some festival charlatan. The seer's influence either made you into an optimist with a drive to fulfill that future or a fatalist resigned to accept it. Add a Wisdom ability boost to your background options.
- 19 **The Wanderer** You knew someone who traveled from place to place with the changing of the wind, such as a minstrel, merchant, outcast, mercenary, or sailor. This person brought you wondrous mementos and inspired a wanderlust within you. Add a Dexterity ability boost to your background options.
- 20 **The Well-Connected Friend** In your circle of associates, there was someone everyone knew. This person had contacts in every social circle. Through this connection, you continue to meet and associate with a wide variety of people in every walk of life. Add a Charisma ability boost to your background options.

STEP 5: RELATIONSHIPS

This aspect of background generation determines the relationships you have with the other PCs and why your character might choose to adventure with them. This step is best performed when the entire group is sitting together and can generate and discuss these connections with each other. You should select another character and roll on the first table to generate an inspiring connection, then determine a different character and roll on the second table to generate a challenging connection. You might choose these characters randomly, or the group might decide that each character has an inspiring connection with the character of the player sitting to the left and a challenging connection with the character of the player sitting to the right.

Other players can reject a relationship connection they don't feel fits with their vision of their own character; in this case, pick another character or a different relationship. Even though you and the other characters share a connection, only you add the skill feats from the relationships you roll to your background options.

TABLE 4-9: INSPIRING RELATIONSHIP

1d12	Result
1	Animal Helpers When you and this character were younger, you worked together to nurse sick animals back to health. Add the Train Animal skill feat to your background options.
2	Comrade-in-Arms You and this character were once comrades in military service, and you trained yourself and this character to improve your

	physical fitness. Add the Assurance skill feat for Athletics to your background options.
3	Desperate Intimidation You had to frighten off pirates or slavers looking to capture you and this character. Add the Group Coercion skill feat to your background options.
4	Homelessness At a time when you were both living on the streets, you taught this character valuable pointers to survive. Add the Streetwise skill feat to your background options.
5	Kindly Witch This character connected you to a kindly but reclusive person who was living at the edge of civilization but had expansive knowledge to share. Add the Natural Medicine skill feat to your background options.
6	Liberators You and this character worked together to free some captives—including one of your friends or relatives—from a gang of slavers. Add the Lengthy Diversion skill feat to your background options.
7	Magician This character supported your brief dalliance with stage magic, which you took up as a precursor to learning actual magic or simply to keep your fingers nimble. Add the Subtle Theft skill feat to your background options.
8	Missing Child When a young relative disappeared in a busy market, this character helped you question merchants and shoppers and find the child before they came to any harm. Add the Hobnobber skill feat to your background options.
9	Patron of the Arts This character encouraged you to excel at a type of performance you loved, even going so far as to support you in lean times. Add the Virtuoso Performer skill feat to your background options.
10	Religious Students You and this character shared some religious training in the past, even if you didn't stick with it, and you admired their piety. Add the Student of the Canon skill feat to your background options.
11	Timely Cure When a family member of yours was dying and there didn't seem to be much hope, this character brought a simple but effective alchemical cure. You are determined to pay this favor forward. Add the Alchemical Crafting skill feat to your background options.
12	Wasteland Survivors You and this character were lost in a dangerous wasteland together and depended upon each other for survival; you're still not certain that either of you would have survived the ordeal without the other's aid. Add the Forager skill feat to your background options.

TABLE 4-10: CHALLENGING RELATIONSHIP

1d12	Result
1	Accidental Fall This character once inadvertently shoved you off a ledge or balcony. You're mostly certain it was a mistake, but the fall was terrifying, and you've resolved to never be caught unaware

	like that again. Add the Cat Fall skill feat to your background options.
2	Accusation of Theft You were once secretly certain that this character stole a cherished valuable from you. You were determined to steal it back, until you learned that this character wasn't in fact to blame and you'd only misplaced the item. Add the Pickpocket skill feat to your background options.
3	Called Before Judges Information provided by this character—either intentionally or inadvertently given—required you to justify yourself in front of a group of bureaucrats or magistrates. Add the Group Impression skill feat to your background options.
4	Matter of Might You have long considered this character your rival in a question of strength. You are determined to prove yourself to be mightier, perhaps by intelligent application of force if you aren't physically imposing. Add the Hefty Hauler skill feat to your background options.
5	Mercantile Expertise To encourage an employer to hire you instead of this character, you worked hard to demonstrate your keen mercantile sense. It didn't work; the employer hired this character anyway. Add the Bargain Hunter skill feat to your background options.
6	Privileged Position You once sought the favor of a powerful spellcaster as a mentor, but this character was plainly the mentor's favorite, no matter how hard you tried. Add the Quick Identification skill feat to your background options.
7	Relationship Ender You once warned off an admirer seeking this character's affections. You still maintain that the match would have been a poor one and that you did this character a favor. Add the Quick Coercion skill feat to your background options.
8	Rival Trackers You and this character worked for a time as rival hunters, whether tracking animals or escaped criminals. Add the Experienced Tracker skill feat to your background options.
9	Seeking Accolades You never seemed to capture the attention of the crowds at the tavern as easily as this character did, so you worked hard to practice your showmanship. Add the Impressive Performance skill feat to your background options.
10	Slander You and this character were rivals for the same person's affections, and you stooped to spreading vicious lies before the whole situation fell apart. Add the Charming Liar skill feat to your background options.
11	Social Maneuvering You have always wanted to prove yourself better than this character in a fancy social situation but have yet to decisively do so. Add the Courtly Graces skill feat to your background options.
12	Spy You spied upon this character in the past, either at the behest of someone else or because of your own suspicions. Add the Read Lips skill feat to your background options.

FEATS AND FEATURES

The Core Rulebook presents a character progression carefully designed to offer plenty of options and depth without overwhelming players with too many choices at once. However, you can use the Pathfinder rules to create an infinite number of variant progressions. If your group wants more powerful characters, specific themes for all characters, or the like, you can implement these variants.

DUAL-CLASS PCS

Sometimes, especially when you have a particularly small play group or want to play incredibly versatile characters, you might want to allow dual-class characters that have the full benefits of two different classes.

BUILDING A DUAL-CLASS CHARACTER

When building a dual-class character, the primary changes to the character creation process are fairly straightforward. Choose and implement your character's ancestry and background as normal. Then, when you get to the step of choosing a class, select two classes and add everything from each class except Hit Points and starting skills: initial proficiencies, class features, class feats, extra skill feats and skill increases for rogues, and so on. As always, use the highest proficiency granted for a given statistic. For instance, if one class gave you expert proficiency in Will saves and the other gave you master proficiency in Will saves, you would be a master in Will saves.

Use only the higher Hit Points per level from the two classes. For starting skills, apply the skills automatically granted by each class, and then apply the larger number of additional skills. For instance, a cleric of Shelyn/ranger would gain Hit Points equal to 10 + their Constitution modifier per level, start with the trained proficiency rank in Nature and Survival from ranger and Religion and either Crafting or Performance from cleric, and then gain a number of additional skills of their choice equal to 4 + their Intelligence modifier, since the ranger provides the trained proficiency rank in more additional skills than the cleric does (this example doesn't include any skills they gained from their background or other sources). This character would also have the deity, divine spellcasting, divine font, and doctrine class features from cleric plus the Hunt Prey, hunter's edge, and ranger feat class features from ranger.

SPELLS

Dual-class spellcasters get full access to all the spells of any spellcasting classes they have.

For instance, a sorcerer/wizard gets five cantrips in their spell repertoire from sorcerer, five prepared cantrips from wizard, three spontaneous 1st-level spell slots from the sorcerer (with three 1st-level spells in their repertoire), and three 1st-level prepared spell slots from wizard (or four, for a specialist). They keep these spells entirely separate and get the full benefits of both spellcasting class features, even if both classes use the same tradition.

Classes with focus pools get all the



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Focus Points granted by all of them. These share one focus pool as normal, with the standard cap of 3 maximum Focus Points.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

A dual-class character gains the class feats and class features for both classes at each level as they advance, with the exception of ability boosts, general feats, skill feats, and skill increases—the character gets each of these benefits only once per level, since both classes would provide the same benefit. (A dual-class rogue/ranger still gets the extra skill feat and skill increase at levels where the other class doesn't provide them.)

If a character gains the same proficiency rank in a statistic more than once, they still use only the highest rank. In the example above, when the cleric gets Alertness at 5th level, they wouldn't change their Perception rank, since it was already expert due to the ranger's initial proficiencies.

PLAYING WITH DUAL-CLASS CHARACTERS

Playing a dual-class character certainly gives a character more options, and adding additional spellcasting classes can result in a significantly wider variety of powerful spell effects available to each character. Nonetheless, this sort of dual-classing is more likely to increase the party's longevity than it is to drastically adjust the level

of opponents a dual-class character should be fighting. The increases to saving throw proficiencies and Hit Points make characters somewhat sturdier and able to take on slightly higher challenges, but not every fight should be harder, nor should encounters exceed extreme-threat difficulty.

Dual-classing in two similar martial classes to double up on their advantages can result in characters who, instead of increasing their flexibility, become drastically more powerful in one focus. For instance, a fighter/ranger with the flurry hunter's edge gains access to incredibly accurate press actions, and a barbarian/fighter has the barbarian's high damage plus the fighter's high accuracy. One way around this is to simply disallow combinations that double down on a narrow ability, and instead encourage dual-class characters that open up narrative options and increase the character's flexibility. The other solution is to raise the challenge from the opposition, treating the party as if the characters were a level higher. However, this is a choice that affects the whole group, even if only one character is built to mow down foes.

Due to the increased number of class feats a dual-class character has, you should limit how much of a benefit a character gets from feats that scale based on the number of feats you have, such as Resiliency feats from multiclass archetypes. Typically, the limit should be half the number of total class feats the character has.

FREE ARCHETYPE

Sometimes the story of your game calls for a group where everyone is a pirate or an apprentice at a magic school. The free archetype variant introduces a shared aspect to every character without taking away any of that character's existing choices. It can also provide a lighter version of dual-class characters by giving everyone a free multiclass archetype.

BUILDING A CHARACTER

The only difference between a normal character and a free-archetype character is that the character receives an extra class feat at 2nd level and every even level thereafter that they can use only for archetype feats. Depending on the needs of the group and the theme of the game, you might restrict the free feats to those of a single archetype each character in the group has (for a shared backstory), those of archetypes fitting a certain theme (such as only ones from magical archetypes in a game set in a magic school), or entirely unrestricted if you just want a higher-powered game.

If the group all has the same archetype or draws from a limited list, you might want to ignore the free archetype's normal restriction of selecting a certain number of feats before taking a new archetype. That way a character can still pursue another archetype that also fits their character.

PLAYING WITH FREE ARCHETYPES

Free-archetype characters are a bit more versatile and powerful than normal, but usually not so much that they unbalance your game. However, due to the characters' increased access to archetype feats, you should place a limit on the number of feats that scale based on a character's number of archetype feats (mainly multiclass Resiliency feats). Allowing a character to benefit from a number of these feats equal to half their level is appropriate, as this is the maximum number of feats you could use to take archetype feats without this variant.

ANCESTRY PARAGON

Most characters have some elements that connect them to their ancestry but identify more strongly with their class or unique personality. Sometimes, though, a character is the embodiment of their ancestry to the point that it's of equal importance to their class. For a game where an ancestral background is a major theme and such characters are the norm, your group might consider using the ancestry paragon variant.

BUILDING AN ANCESTRY PARAGON CHARACTER

When creating an ancestry paragon character, instead of starting with one ancestry feat and gaining another at 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th levels, the character starts with two ancestry feats and gains another at every odd level thereafter (3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, and so on) for a total of 11 ancestry feats.

PLAYING WITH ANCESTRY PARAGON CHARACTERS

Ancestry paragon characters have a bit more versatility and power than other characters, though their extra abilities are usually limited to themes the ancestry already was suited for. It's unlikely to affect the game balance of combat encounters, but it might make exploration and social challenges easier for the heroes.

SIMPLIFIED ANCESTRIES

The variants presented so far have mostly been aimed at groups looking to increase their nuance in exchange for greater character complexity. However, sometimes players are looking for something a little simpler instead, or want to increase the complexity in one area and decrease it elsewhere, keeping a rough balance. In games where a character's ancestry is only incidental and each PC is more defined by their class and individual characteristics, simplified ancestries allows your group to pick an ancestry and go.

BUILDING A SIMPLIFIED ANCESTRY CHARACTER

When choosing an ancestry for a simplified ancestry character, you gain the ancestry's normal abilities at 1st level, choose a heritage, and gain the appropriate lore feat (Dwarven Lore for dwarves, for example) as your ancestry feat. Simplified ancestry characters never gain ancestry feats beyond that first lore feat. If you want to keep the power level of your game consistent, you can replace the ancestry feats gained at higher levels with general feats.

SIMPLIFIED SKILL FEATS

The standard system gives feats specifically to spend on skills to let PCs gain fun, skill-based options without feeling like they had to sacrifice a feat that could have improved their class's core specialties. In some games, especially those focused on combat with little exploration, downtime, or social interaction, the PCs might have more skill feats than they need. The simplified skill feats variant allows you to reduce this aspect of decision-making.

BUILDING A SIMPLIFIED SKILL FEAT CHARACTER

Simplified skill feat characters don't receive any skill feats, even from their backgrounds. They still gain general feats and can use those to select skill feats if they want a crucial ability. You may want to allow rogues to gain skill feats, but at the normal advancement most characters have, instead of their usual double advancement.

PLAYING WITH SIMPLIFIED SKILL FEAT CHARACTERS

While you probably won't need to adjust combat challenges at all for simplified skill feat characters, skill-based challenges—especially social challenges—will be tougher, especially at higher levels where it's expected characters will have more efficient skill-based abilities due to skill feats. If you prefer more baseline difficulty, you could adjust the expectations down slightly.

LEVEL 0 CHARACTERS

Before they were heroes, every PC came from somewhere, whether they worked on a farm like Valeros or picked pockets on the streets like Seelah. Sometimes, it can be a lot of fun to play a prequel game years before the PCs' first adventure as heroes, or you may have an idea for a low-powered adventure that calls for commoners and apprentices. The rules below provide ways to easily build and use level 0 PCs in your games.

BUILDING CHARACTERS

Building a level 0 character is similar to building a 1st-level character, but you stop after choosing your ancestry and background. A level 0 character still gets the four free ability boosts from Step 6 of the normal character creation process, but not the class ability boost.

INITIAL PROFICIENCIES

A level 0 character is trained in Perception, all saving throws, unarmed attacks, unarmored defense, and one simple weapon of their choice. Additionally, they are trained in a number of skills equal to 2 + their Intelligence modifier. The proficiency bonus for a level 0 character works the same way as normal, but since the level is 0, the total proficiency bonus for being trained is +2.

HIT POINTS

A level 0 character adds their Constitution modifier to their ancestry Hit Points to determine their starting Hit Points.

STARTING MONEY

A level 0 character starts with 5 gp (50 sp) to spend on equipment.

APPRENTICE OPTION

If the story you want to tell is about characters who have started training to become a particular class, you can grant them a small number of additional abilities. An apprentice character is trained in the skill or skills specified for their chosen class (such as Occultism and Performance for a bard) in addition to the skills they gain through their initial proficiencies. They also gain benefits based on the class.

ALCHEMIST

An apprentice alchemist gains the advanced alchemy ability of the alchemy class feature. Their advanced alchemy level is 1, and they have one batch of infused reagents each day. They can make only infused alchemical items.

MONK

An apprentice monk gains the powerful fist class feature.

OTHER MARTIAL CLASS

An apprentice of another martial class (barbarian, champion, fighter, ranger, or rogue) is trained in light armor, all simple weapons, and one martial weapon listed in the class's initial proficiencies. If a martial class not listed here lacks light armor or martial weapon training (as the monk does), give it a different ability as well.

SPELLCASTER

An apprentice spellcaster is trained in the appropriate magic tradition and gains two cantrips from their class. A prepared caster can't change these cantrips each day.

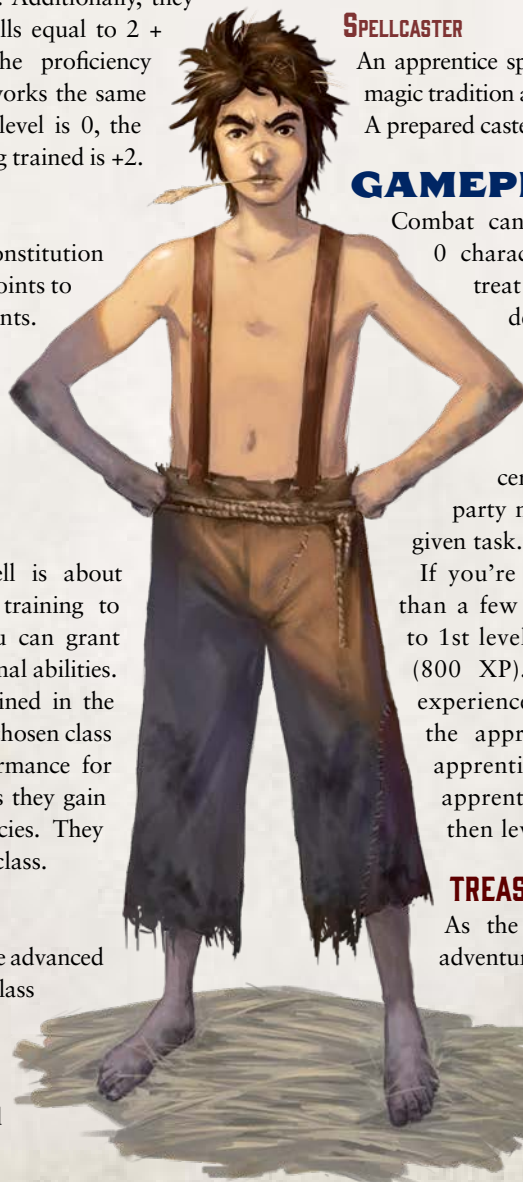
GAMEPLAY

Combat can be especially dangerous for level 0 characters. For safety's sake, you might treat the characters as level -1 when determining what combat encounters are appropriate. For skill checks, they can still accomplish tasks with a simple trained DC using their trained skills, but success is less certain. Since they have fewer skills, the party might not have anyone trained for a given task.

If you're playing these characters for more than a few sessions, consider advancing them to 1st level using the fast advancement speed (800 XP). If your group wants a longer experience at level 0, start the group without the apprentice benefits, then level up to apprentice (gaining those benefits and the apprentice adjustments for their class), and then level up to 1st level.

TREASURE

As the characters start with 5 gp, their adventures up to 1st level should account for the rest of a 1st-level character's starting money. That means you'll distribute treasure worth 10 gp × the number of PCs, a large percentage of which should be in currency.



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MAGIC ITEM VARIANTS

Pathfinder's magic item system is calibrated for a high-fantasy world like Golarion, with plenty of access to magic. However, not all settings, games, or subgenres match those assumptions. Varying from the default magic item system can help your group build games in low-magic settings, where the availability of magic items is unreliable, or where most or all of the power comes from the character and not their gear.

AUTOMATIC BONUS PROGRESSION

This variant removes the item bonus to rolls and DCs usually provided by magic items (with the exception of armor's item bonus) and replaces it with a new kind of bonus—potency—to reflect a character's innate ability instead. In this variant, magic items, if they exist at all, can provide unique special abilities rather than numerical increases.

SPECIAL CLASS FEATURES

Every character automatically gains the class features on Table 4-11: Automatic Bonus Progression.

TABLE 4-11: AUTOMATIC BONUS PROGRESSION

Level	Benefits
1	—
2	Attack potency +1
3	Skill potency (one at +1)
4	Devastating attacks (two dice)
5	Defense potency +1
6	Skill potency (two at +1 each)
7	Perception potency +1
8	Saving throw potency +1
9	Skill potency (one at +2, one at +1)
10	Attack potency +2
11	Defense potency +2
12	Devastating attacks (three dice)
13	Perception potency +2; skill potency (two at +2 each, one at +1)
14	Saving throw potency +2
15	Skill potency (three at +2 each, one at +1)
16	Attack potency +3
17	Ability apex; skill potency (one at +3, two at +2 each, two at +1 each)
18	Defense potency +3
19	Devastating attacks (four dice), Perception potency +3
20	Saving throw potency +3; skill potency (two at +3 each, two at +2 each, two at +1 each)

ATTACK POTENCY

2ND

Starting at 2nd level, you gain a +1 potency bonus to

attack rolls with all weapons and unarmed attacks. This increases to +2 at 10th level, and +3 at 16th level.

SKILL POTENCY

3RD

At 3rd level, choose a single skill. You gain a +1 potency bonus with that skill. At 6th level, choose a second skill to gain a +1 potency bonus. At 9th level, choose one of those skills and increase its potency bonus to +2. At 13th level, increase the potency bonus of your second skill to +2 and choose a third skill to gain a +1 potency bonus. At 15th level, increase the third skill's potency bonus to +2 and choose a fourth skill to gain a +1 potency bonus. At 17th level, choose one of your three skills with a +2 potency bonus to increase to +3, and choose a fifth skill to gain a +1 potency bonus. Finally, at 20th level, choose one of the two skills with a +2 potency bonus to increase to +3, choose one of the three skills at a +1 potency bonus to increase to +2, and choose one new skill to gain a +1 potency bonus. You can spend 1 week to retrain one of these assignments at any time.

DEVASTATING ATTACKS

4TH

At 4th level, your weapon and unarmed Strikes deal two damage dice instead of one. This increases to three at 12th level and to four at 19th level.

DEFENSE POTENCY

5TH

At 5th level, you gain a +1 potency bonus to AC. At 11th level, this bonus increases to +2, and at 18th level, to +3.

PERCEPTION POTENCY

7TH

At 7th level, you gain a +1 potency bonus to Perception, increasing to +2 at level 13 and +3 at level 19.

SAVING THROW POTENCY

8TH

At 8th level, you gain a +1 potency bonus to saves, increasing to +2 at level 14 and +3 at level 20.

ABILITY APEX

17TH

At 17th level, choose one ability score to either increase by 2 or increase to 18 (whichever grants the higher score).

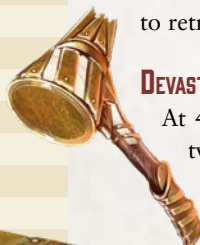
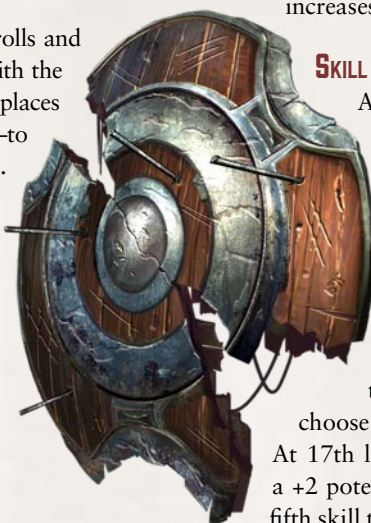


TABLE 4-12: HIGH-QUALITY WEAPONS

Quality	Item Bonus	Property Rune Slots	Item Level	Price
Expert	+1	1	2	35 gp
Master	+2	2	10	935 gp
Legendary	+3	3	16	8,935 gp

TABLE 4-13: HIGH-QUALITY ARMOR

Quality	Bonus Increase	Property Rune Slots	Item Level	Price
Expert	+1	1	5	160 gp
Master	+2	2	11	1,060 gp
Legendary	+3	3	18	20,560 gp

TABLE 4-14: DEVASTATING WEAPONS

Quality	Item Bonus	Damage Dice	Property Rune Slots	Item Level	Price
Expert	+1	1	1	2	35 gp
Expert devastating	+1	2	1	4	100 gp
Master	+2	2	2	10	1,000 gp
Master devastating	+2	3	2	12	2,000 gp
Legendary	+3	3	3	16	10,000 gp
Legendary devastating	+3	4	3	19	40,000 gp

TABLE 4-15: RESILIENT ARMOR

Quality	Bonus Increase	Save Bonus	Property Rune Slots	Item Level	Price
Expert	+1	—	1	5	160 gp
Expert resilient	+1	+1	1	8	500 gp
Master	+2	+1	2	11	1,400 gp
Master resilient	+2	+2	2	14	4,500 gp
Legendary	+3	+2	3	18	24,000 gp
Legendary resilient	+3	+3	3	20	70,000 gp

ADJUSTING ITEMS AND TREASURE

With this variant, you can ignore as much of Table 10–9: Party Treasure by Level on page 509 of the *Core Rulebook* as you want, though you'll usually want to provide consistent currency. The main area your choice will impact is in spellcasting items, such as scrolls and wands.

Remove all potency runes, striking runes, and resilient runes. Items that normally grant an item bonus to statistics or damage dice no longer do, other than the base item bonus to AC from armor. Apex items do not increase ability scores. If your world still includes magic items, a safe bet is to continue to give out consumable items at roughly the rate on Table 10–9 of the *Core Rulebook*.

If you choose to eliminate runes entirely, this can reduce the PCs' damage since they won't have runes like *flaming* or *holy*. If you've removed nearly all treasure, challenges might become more difficult, even with automatic bonuses.

HIGH-QUALITY

In this variant, gear can provide bonuses even if it's not magical. This is useful for games and settings that set out to give fine, non-magical items the same prominence as magic items. High-quality gear requires the corresponding proficiency rank in Crafting to Craft.



HIGH-QUALITY WEAPONS AND ARMOR

High-quality weapons and armor give the same benefits as weapon and armor potency runes (Tables 4–12 and 4–13). To remove magic from weapons and armor, you can use the devastating attacks and saving throw potency entries from the automatic bonus progression variant, or you can have quality also provide the effects of *striking* and *resilient* runes, using Table 4–14 and Table 4–15. If you choose to still have magic weapons and armor, the effects don't stack with quality.

HIGH-QUALITY SKILL ITEMS

Items with skill or Perception bonuses don't have fundamental runes. If an existing skill bonus item costs less than the listed Price for a high-quality skill item or has a lower level, it likely has a feature such as a limitation, so adjust accordingly. A character in a game with this variant can Craft or buy a non-magical item to boost Perception or a skill using the table below.

TABLE 4-16: HIGH-QUALITY SKILL ITEM

Quality	Item Bonus	Item Level	Price
Expert	+1	3	40 gp
Master	+2	9	550 gp
Legendary	+3	17	11,000 gp

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PROFICIENCY WITHOUT LEVEL

This variant presents a change to the proficiency bonus system, scaling it differently for a style of game that's outside the norm. This is a significant change to the system.

The proficiency rank progression in the *Core Rulebook* is designed for heroic fantasy games where heroes rise from humble origins to world-shattering strength. For some games, this narrative arc doesn't fit. Such games are about hedging bets in an uncertain and gritty world, in which even the world's best fighter can't guarantee a win against a large group of moderately skilled brigands. In games like these, your group might want to consider removing the character's level from the proficiency bonus.

The initial implementation is fairly straightforward: the proficiency bonus just becomes +2 for trained, +4 for expert, +6 for master, and +8 for legendary. We recommend giving an untrained character a -2 proficiency modifier instead of a +0 proficiency bonus.

Additionally, for creatures, hazards, magic items, and so on, reduce each statistic that would include a proficiency bonus by the level of the creature or other rules element. These statistics are typically modifiers and DCs for attacks, ACs, saving throws, Perception, skills, and spells.

Finally, decrease the skill DCs of most tasks to account for the level being removed. You can just subtract the level from the DC tables on page 503 of the *Core Rulebook*, or you can reference Table 4-17: Simple Skill DCs (No Level) for a set of DCs that's easier to remember. The new DCs make it a little harder for high-level characters to succeed than it would be when using the default numbers from the *Core Rulebook*, in keeping with the theme mentioned earlier. Combat outcomes will tend to flatten out, with critical successes and critical failures being less likely across the game. This is particularly notable in spells, where you're less likely to see the extreme effects of critical failures on saves.

TABLE 4-17: SIMPLE SKILL DCs (NO LEVEL)

Proficiency Rank	DC
Untrained	10
Trained	15
Expert	20
Master	25
Legendary	30

ADJUSTING ENCOUNTERS

Telling stories where a large group of low-level monsters can still be a significant threat to a high-level PC (and conversely, a single higher-level monster is not much of a threat to a group of PCs) requires some significant shifts in encounter building, including shifts in the PCs' rewards.

Under the math in the *Core Rulebook*, two monsters of a certain level are roughly as challenging as a single monster 2 levels higher. However, with level removed

from proficiency, this assumption is no longer true. The XP budget for creatures uses a different scale, as shown in Table 4-18: Creature XP (No Level). You'll still use the same XP budget for a given threat level as shown on Table 10-1: Encounter Budget on page 489 of the *Core Rulebook* (80 XP for a moderate-threat encounter, 120 for a severe-threat encounter, and so on).

TABLE 4-18: CREATURE XP (NO LEVEL)

Creature's Level	XP
Party level - 7	9
Party level - 6	12
Party level - 5	14
Party level - 4	18
Party level - 3	21
Party level - 2	26
Party level - 1	32
Party level	40
Party level + 1	48
Party level + 2	60
Party level + 3	72
Party level + 4	90
Party level + 5	108
Party level + 6	135
Party level + 7	160

While the XP values in Table 4-18 work well in most cases, sometimes they might not account for the effects of creatures' special abilities when facing a party of a drastically different level. For instance, a ghost mage could prove too much for 5th-level PCs with its incorporeality, flight, and high-level spells, even though it's outnumbered.

ADJUSTING TREASURE

Treasure and the cost of items in the *Core Rulebook* are designed to make it as easy as possible for you to build encounters without worrying about awarding too much or too little treasure based on whether you use creatures who carry items. However, using this variant, the PCs might defeat a creature 5 levels higher than they are, or even more! Too many encounters with higher-level foes can wind up giving the PCs more treasure than you expected, or vice-versa if they're fighting weaker foes that put up more of a fight but still have poor treasure. You can nudge this in the right direction by making periodic adjustments if the PCs' treasure drifts too far from expectations. Making it so they can't easily sell or buy magic items will mean it's harder for them to exploit treasure they gain. To sidestep the treasure economy entirely, you can use the automatic item bonus progression, found on page 196.

SKILL POINTS

The default progression of skill proficiency ranks is simple and doesn't require many mathematical calculations as a player assigns skills. However, some players prefer a more granular system with a greater ability to diversify their skills. This variant allows characters to assign their skill increases more flexibly, potentially having fewer skills at the highest possible rank in exchange for more skills at a lower rank.

ASSIGNING SKILL POINTS

At 1st level, a character using the Skill Points variant gains their initial skill proficiencies as described in the *Core Rulebook*. However, at every level beyond 1st, instead of gaining skill increases, the character gains a number of Skill Points, as indicated on Table 4-19: Skill Points by Level. The character can spend these Skill Points to increase their proficiency rank in various skills, as shown on Table 4-20: Cost to Increase Rank. A character must meet the minimum level indicated on the table to increase their rank, primarily to avoid having a player becoming unrealistically good at one skill early in their adventuring career while neglecting everything else. Characters can save up Skill Points between levels for a more expensive increase later on.

TABLE 4-19: SKILL POINTS BY LEVEL

Level	Skill Points Gained
1	Initial proficiencies
2-5	1
6-13	2
14-20	4

TABLE 4-20: COST TO INCREASE RANK

Rank	Minimum Level	Skill Point Cost
Untrained to trained	1	1
Trained to expert	3	2
Expert to master	7	4
Master to legendary	15	8

ROGUES

Because rogues get skill increases at every level in the standard rules, they also get more Skill Points. Rogues gain double the number of Skill Points listed on Table 4-19.

RETRAINING

A character can retrain the proficiency ranks they gained using Skill Points much as they would retrain a skill increase under the normal rules. With a week of downtime, a character can reduce their proficiency rank in one skill by one step to get back the number of Skill Points spent to gain that increase. For example, reducing a master proficiency rank to expert would grant a character 4 Skill Points. The character can then reassign those points as they see fit or save them for later. Reducing proficiency ranks for multiple skills or reducing a single proficiency rank by multiple steps takes additional weeks of downtime.

SKILL POINTS IN PLAY

Players using Skill Points have more flexibility to build characters with a broader range of skills in which they're trained or better than normal, and this variant encourages that flexibility by increasing the cost of specializing. For instance, a 19th-level fighter could use Skill Points to be a master in seven different skills, or to be legendary in three skills. While this makes the variance in skills slightly less predictable, it shouldn't have a big enough effect on a group's capabilities that you need to make any significant adjustments when you run the game.



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STAMINA'S IMPACT

The main gameplay consequence of using these stamina rules is that a quick 10- or 20-minute rest can restore most groups to full or nearly full health via Taking a Breather and Treating Wounds as necessary, allowing more encounters with shorter breaks in between. Additionally, charismatic or otherwise diplomatic characters gain fun and useful ways to bolster their allies.

Because spells that heal Hit Points don't restore Stamina Points, it's a little harder to heal up completely in the middle of a fight. This can mean that fights become deadly after characters have been beaten down, possibly causing retreats to be more frequent, but the retreats themselves are shorter.

The focus of the game can stay consistently within encounters, with less managing of time and resources outside of battle.

STAMINA

In some fantasy stories, the heroes are able to avoid any serious injury until the situation gets dire, getting by with a graze or a flesh wound and needing nothing more than a quick rest to get back on their feet. If your group wants to tell tales like those, you can use the stamina variant to help make that happen.

STAMINA POINTS

Stamina Points represent a character's energy and readiness. They're reduced by damage just like Hit Points, but a character always loses their Stamina Points first, and loses Hit Points only if they're out of Stamina Points. If a character takes damage exceeding their remaining Stamina Points, the excess damage reduces their Hit Points. However, they lose any temporary Hit Points before losing Stamina Points.

Though Stamina Points and Hit Points function similarly when a character takes damage, a character recovers them differently. A *heal* spell restores Hit Points, not Stamina Points, and the actions described below (like Take a Breather) restore only Stamina Points, not Hit Points. A character regains all their Stamina Points after a full night's rest. Hit Points still determine whether a character remains conscious—a character at 0 HP is unconscious, no matter how many Stamina Points they have.

In addition to their ancestry Hit Points, a PC gains the number of Stamina Points and Hit Points indicated in the second and third columns of Table 4–21 at 1st level. Both values increase by the same amount at each level thereafter. This replaces the Hit Points a character gains from their class in a standard game.

RESOLVE POINTS

In this variant, each PC also has a pool of Resolve Points, representing their intrinsic grit and luck. A character's maximum Resolve Points is equal to their key ability modifier, and a character regains all their Resolve Points with a full night's rest. In addition to spending Resolve Points to regain Stamina Points (as described under Stamina Actions), characters can spend Resolve Points in the following way.

STABILIZE

If a character is dying at the start of their turn, their player can spend 1 Resolve Point to stabilize at 0 HP, gaining or increasing the wounded condition as normal for stabilizing. At the start of the character's next turn, they gain 1 HP and wake up (unless they started dying again). The character can act on that turn. Consider this an optional rule best suited for groups that have little access to healing. When using this rule, you might remove the ability for characters to use Hero Points to stabilize.

STAMINA ACTIONS

TAKE A BREATHER

EXPLORATION

Cost 1 Resolve Point

You rest for 10 minutes and recover your stamina. After you complete this activity, you regain all your Stamina Points.

TABLE 4-21: STAMINA AND HIT POINTS BY CLASS

Normal Class HP	Class Stamina Points	Class Hit Points	Classes
6 + Con modifier	3 + Con modifier	3	Sorcerer, wizard
8 + Con modifier	4 + Con modifier	4	Alchemist, bard, cleric, druid, rogue
10 + Con modifier	5 + Con modifier	5	Champion, fighter, monk, ranger
12 + Con modifier	6 + Con modifier	6	Barbarian

RALLY

AUDITORY EMOTION EXPLORATION LINGUISTIC MENTAL

Prerequisites trained in Diplomacy, Intimidation, or Performance

You spend 1 minute encouraging your ally. Though this action typically has the auditory and linguistic traits, if you're using the Performance skill, the GM might adjust the traits for this action to match the traits for your type of performance.

Attempt a DC 15 skill check. The GM might adjust this DC based on the circumstances, such as attempting to Rally an ally who just suffered a humiliating defeat.

Critical Success The ally can spend 1 Resolve Point to regain all their Stamina Points.

Success You can continue encouraging your ally for a total of 10 minutes. If you do, they can spend 1 Resolve Point to regain all their Stamina Points.

Critical Failure The ally takes 1d8 mental damage, but this can reduce only Stamina Points, never Hit Points.

STAMINA FEATS

ENCOURAGING WORDS ◆

FEAT 2

AUDITORY GENERAL LINGUISTIC MENTAL SKILL

Prerequisites trained in Diplomacy

Requirements The target ally lost Stamina Points within the last round.

You give an ally within 30 feet a quick pep talk, helping them recover. Attempt a Diplomacy check. The DC is usually 15, though the GM might adjust it based on the circumstances. If you have expert proficiency in Diplomacy, you can instead attempt a DC 20 check to increase the Stamina Points recovered by 5; if you have master proficiency, you can attempt a DC 30 check to increase the Stamina Points by 15; if you have legendary proficiency, you can attempt a DC 40 check to increase the Stamina Points by 25. No matter the result, the ally is temporarily immune to Encouraging Words until they either Take a Breather or rest for the day.

Critical Success The ally recovers 2d8 Stamina Points.

Success The ally recovers 1d8 Stamina Points.

Critical Failure The ally takes 1d8 mental damage, but this can reduce only Stamina Points, never Hit Points.

STEEL YOUR RESOLVE ◆◆

FEAT 3

GENERAL

Cost 1 Resolve Point

Regain Stamina Points equal to half your maximum.

OTHER CREATURES

There's no need to give Stamina Points to monsters that are expected to be encountered once and likely defeated. However, you might use Stamina Points for a recurring character, especially an NPC who fights alongside the PCs. Usually, it's easiest to turn half the creature's Hit Points into Stamina Points. While enemy healers still work as they're intended to, players might be upset about the enemies' ability to heal their allies to full Hit Points, while the PCs are left not being able to heal their allies' Stamina Points. In this case, give more enemies Stamina Points to compensate.

NO-LIMIT STAMINA

If you want a fast-paced, almost superheroic game, you can skip the Resolve Point component of this subsystem and simply make Taking a Breather and Rally free. This gives the characters a lot of staying power, meaning that the group will typically keep adventuring until they run out of spells for the day, rather than having the additional pressure of running out of Resolve Points. If you use this approach, omit the Steel Your Resolve feat, as it's too powerful if there's no cost to use it! Alternatively, if you want to keep it, you can require a character to Take a Breather before they can Steel their Resolve again.



CHAPTER 5: NPC GALLERY

Monsters and PCs aren't the only inhabitants of your world. Though they might not be heroes, NPCs can play various roles in your game, such as calling PCs to adventure, serving as obstacles in social encounters, or opposing PCs in battle. This chapter presents almost a hundred NPCs for your game, plus rules to modify them to fit any particular niche.

USING THE NPC GALLERY

In this section, you'll find all kinds of NPCs across a variety of categories and roles for you to use in your game. Their levels span from –1 to 8, the range you most often need for stock characters. Since high-level opponents, major villains, ruling monarchs, and the like tend to be unique individuals, you'll likely create those NPCs specifically for the role they serve, using the rules for Building Creatures on page 56. But you can never have too many lower-level NPCs on hand when the PCs unexpectedly take an unusually keen interest in an NPC or pick a fight at a roadside tavern.

The level listed on an NPC's stat block is their level assuming they're used in combat; they should be able to hold their own as well as any other creature of that level. But many of these NPCs are primarily noncombatants who are much more skilled in their occupation than they ever would be in combat. To that end, those specialist NPCs' entries also mention a higher level that you would use when the PCs have to compete against them in their area of expertise.

CUSTOMIZING NPCs

The NPCs in this gallery are all humans with no languages besides Common. In some cases, such as human-centric Taldor where Common is the official language, you can most likely use the NPCs in this section as written. But more often, you'll need to make minor adjustments to the details to portray a particular NPC. Since these stat blocks present the most basic possible version for each character, you shouldn't need to remove any statistics or abilities unless your NPC can't speak Common.

The next few sections provide guidelines and ancestry adjustments you can use to quickly customize a default NPC.

ADJUSTING LEVEL

Sometimes you'll need an NPC that fills a particular role—say an angry drunk—but the level in the stat block presented isn't the right fit for your group. You can start by applying the elite or weak adjustments on page 6 of the *Bestiary* to adjust the NPC's level by 1 in either direction.

If you need to change the NPC's level beyond that, use the values from the tables in Building Creatures in Chapter 2, and add or remove special abilities as necessary to suit the NPC's new level.

CHANGING ALIGNMENT

Aside from some obviously aligned NPCs, like the villains, most of the NPCs in this gallery are presented as neutral. If you want to change an NPC's alignment, all you have to do is change their alignment trait. You might consider how the new alignment affects the NPC's personality and adjust their skills accordingly; for instance, a lawful evil teacher might have a higher modifier for Intimidation than Diplomacy.

CHANGING LANGUAGES

If you need a human character who speaks more languages to fit their backstory, nation of origin, or role, simply add those languages.

CHAPTER MAP

The chapter divides NPCs into 18 sections to make it easier for you to find the types of characters you need for your game.

- Courtiers (page 206)
- Criminals (page 208)
- Devotees (page 212)
- Downtrodden (page 214)
- Explorers (page 216)
- Foresters (page 218)
- Healers (page 220)
- Laborers (page 222)
- Magistrates (page 224)
- Mercenaries (page 226)
- Mystics (page 228)
- Officers (page 232)
- Performers (page 236)
- Publicans (page 238)
- Scholars (page 240)
- Seafarers (page 242)
- Tradespeople (page 244)
- Villains (page 246)

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ORGANIZATION AND DEITY TEMPLATES

In addition to the templates in this book, the *Pathfinder Lost Omens Character Guide* presents theme templates to quickly and easily make these NPCs members of various organizations (see Theme Templates on page 116). If you're looking for adherents of a specific deity, *Pathfinder Lost Omens Gods & Magic* offers a theme template (see Theme Templates on page 9) that allows you to customize an NPC to fit any deity, or a deity of your own creation!

NPC ANCESTRY ADJUSTMENTS

To use one of the NPCs in this section to represent an NPC of a different ancestry, apply the adjustments below for the desired ancestry. These provide the basic features from that ancestry, like darkvision, altered Speed, and unique abilities like a halfling's keen eyes. For other ancestries, you can create similar templates following the same format. In addition to these base changes, you can add the effects of a specific heritage: you might apply the snow goblin heritage if your NPC is a Frostfur goblin and you want them to have cold resistance. You can also give them an ancestry feat, or even adjust their ability scores and skills to reflect the new ancestry's strengths and weaknesses.

For a half-elf, half-orc, or any other heritage essential to the character, you should always apply the heritage effect.

DWARF

- Change the human trait to dwarf.
- Add Dwarven to the NPC's languages.
- Add darkvision.
- Decrease the NPC's Speed by 5 feet. If the NPC already has a reduced Speed due to their armor, consider applying the Unburdened Iron ancestry feat.

ELF

- Change the human trait to elf.
- Add Elven to the NPC's languages.
- Add low-light vision.
- Increase the NPC's Speed by 5 feet.

GNOME

- Change the human trait to gnome.
- Add Gnomish and Sylvan to the NPC's languages.
- Add low-light vision.

GOBLIN

- Change the human trait to goblin.
- Add Goblin to the NPC's languages.
- Add darkvision.

HALFLING

- Change the human trait to halfling.
- Add Halfling to the NPC's languages.
- Add the keen eyes ability below.

KEEN EYES

Your eyes are sharp, allowing you to make out small details about concealed or even invisible creatures that others might miss. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus when using the Seek action to find hidden or undetected creatures within 30 feet of you. When you target an opponent that is concealed from you or hidden from you, reduce the DC of the flat check to 3 for a concealed target or 9 for a hidden one.

MAKING A SPECIALIST

These NPCs contain several specialists, such as barristers and navigators, who are a higher-level challenge at their specialty than in combat, and often have a special ability related to it. To make your own specialists, you can easily switch out skills, but you might want to use the following special abilities to make those NPCs more evocative!

Butter Up (emotion, mental) When someone eats a dish or treat made by this NPC, the NPC can attempt a Baking Lore, Cooking Lore, or similar check against that creature's Will DC, with the same results as the Make an Impression action of Diplomacy. If more than one creature partakes, the NPC uses the same check result against each creature's Will DC.

TABLE 5-1: NPCs

NPC	Level	Page
Acolyte of Nethys	1	212
Acrobat	2	236
Adept	-1	228
Advisor	5	207
Antipaladin	5	247
Apothecary	-1 (3)*	220
Apprentice	-1	244
Archer sentry	2	233
Assassin	8	211
Astronomer	2	241
Bandit	2	208
Barkeep	1	238
Barrister	-1 (4)*	232
Beast tamer	4	237
Beggar	-1	214
Bodyguard	1	226
Bosun	3	243
Bounty hunter	4	226
Burglar	4	210
Captain of the guard	6	234
Charlatan	3	209
Chronicler	3	216
Commoner	-1	214
Cult leader	7	230
Cultist	1	228
Dancer	1	236
Demonologist	7	231
Despot	5	248
Dockhand	0	222
Drunkard	2	239
Executioner	6	235
False priest	4	229
Farmer	0	222
Fence	5	210
Gang leader	7	249
Grave robber	1	208
Gravedigger	1	223
Guard	1	232
Guide	4	216
Guildmaster	8 (12)*	245
Harbormaster	3	225
Harrow reader	-1 (3)*	228

Hunter	7	219
Innkeeper	1	239
Jailer	3	233
Judge	-1 (6)*	224
Librarian	-1 (3)*	240
Mage for hire	3	226
Mastermind	4 (7)*	246
Merchant	-1 (4)*	244
Miner	0	223
Monster hunter	6	227
Navigator	2 (4)*	242
Necromancer	5	230
Noble	3	206
Palace guard	4	206
Physician	-1 (4)*	220
Pirate	2	242
Plague doctor	5	221
Poacher	2	218
Priest of Pharasma	6	213
Prisoner	1	215
Prophet	2	212
Reckless scientist	6	248
Ruffian	2	209
Saboteur	2	246
Sage	6	241
Servant	-1	222
Server	-1	238
Ship captain	6	243
Smith	3 (6)*	245
Spy	6	207
Surgeon	2 (6)*	220
Tax collector	-1 (3)*	224
Teacher	-1 (4)*	240
Tomb raider	5	217
Torchbearer	0	216
Tracker	3	218
Troubadour	3	237
Urchin	-1	215
Warden	6	225
Watch officer	3	234
Zealot of Asmodeus	4	212

*This NPC is a higher-level challenge in their area of expertise. The NPC's level during such a challenge is listed in parentheses.

Call Your Bluff When gambling, the NPC may use Games Lore to Sense Motive instead of Perception.

Child Care When treating infants, the NPC can use their Midwifery Lore skill in place of Medicine, and can use Medicine's trained actions on infants.

Find Footing ♦ (concentrate) The NPC attempts an Architecture Lore, Engineering Lore, or similar skill check to find a stable path across uneven ground. This grants them and anyone they share this information with a +2 circumstance bonus on Acrobatics checks to Balance across that ground.

Gone Fishing The NPC can use Fishing Lore to Track aquatic creatures or to Aid checks to Track them.

Local Lore When they first meet a given person from their home settlement, the NPC can automatically attempt one check to Recall Knowledge about that person. This uses the Lore skill for that settlement.

Quick Transcription The NPC can attempt to copy a document faster than normal, provided they don't alter the content. They attempt a Scribing Lore check, completing the task in half the time on a success (one-quarter on a critical success).

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RANKS OF NOBILITY

Some noble ranks, from highest to lowest: king/queen, grand duke/grand duchess, duke/duchess, marquess, count/countess, landgrave, viscount/viscountess, baron/baroness, baronet/baronetess, tribune, lord/lady, knight

COURTIERS

Though adventurers travel through perilous dungeons and across treacherous wilderness, sometimes the most dangerous place they can end up is in a noble court.

NOBLE

Envied by many and detested by still others, nobles exude confidence and gentility. Gossip and gambling are often nobles' favorite pastimes. Day-to-day life for a noble is often a mixture of business and leisure, and to an onlooker, such a lifestyle can appear to be nothing more than a string of meals, parties, and game halls. However, despite what some might believe, life as a noble is often quite dangerous and requires far more intellect than it would appear—along with a healthy dose of suspicion.

NOBLE

CREATURE 3

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +11

Languages Common

Skills Deception +10, Diplomacy +10, Gambling Lore +8, Intimidation +9

Str +2, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

Items fashionable fine clothes, loaded dice, rapier, silver flask, signet ring

Lip Reader After years of sticking their nose where it doesn't belong, the noble has learned to read lips from afar, with the effects of the Lip Reader feat (*Core Rulebook* 265).

AC 18; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +10, **Will** +11

HP 45

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ rapier +12 (deadly 1d8, disarm, finesse), **Damage** 1d6+5 piercing

Melee ♦ fist +12 (agile, finesse, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4+5 bludgeoning

Noble's Ruse ♦ **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The noble Feints. On a success, the noble Strikes the target.

Sneak Attack The noble deals an extra 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

PALACE GUARD

Every palace has its gatekeepers. Often the younger offspring of minor nobility or those from long lines of trusted staff, the palace guards are in charge of defending the royal family and their inner stronghold. Their days consist of guarding doorways, escorting nobles to various locations, and keeping those in their charge as safe as possible. The statistics below are for the lowest rank-and-file member of a small nation's palace guards; they also work well for elite guards of a lesser noble.

PALACE GUARD

CREATURE 4

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +15

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +12, Diplomacy +10, Intimidation +8

Str +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

Items chain mail with palace insignia, halberd, simple manacles

AC 22; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +8, **Will** +10

HP 60

Attack of Opportunity ⤵

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ halberd +14 (reach, versatile S), **Damage** 1d10+7 piercing

Melee ♦ fist +12 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4+7 bludgeoning

Royal Defender Ever loyal, the palace guard gains a +2 circumstance bonus to attack rolls when defending their liege.



PALACE GUARD

ADVISOR

Trusted counselors of the court, advisors whisper words of guidance in the ears of those in power. Many nobles lean so heavily on their counsel that they make few decisions without them and insist on their attendance at all meetings and public events. Advisors are often master manipulators, and their guidance can shape a barony or even a kingdom—for good or ill.

ADVISOR

CREATURE 5

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +14

Languages Common

Skills Deception +15, Diplomacy +15, Legal Lore +11, Occultism +9, Performance +11, Society +11

Str +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +4

Items dagger (2), fine clothes, small harp, *minor healing potion*, whip

Placate An advisor is well versed in soothing agitated nobles. Their calming voice gives them a +2 circumstance bonus to Deception and Diplomacy checks when dealing with members of the nobility.

AC 21; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +11, **Will** +15

HP 56

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ whip +11 (disarm, finesse, nonlethal, reach, trip), **Damage** 1d4+2 slashing

Ranged ♦ dagger +11 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+2 piercing

Occult Spontaneous Spells DC 22, attack +13; **3rd** (2 slots) *mind reading*, *soothe*, *zone of truth*; **2nd** (3 slots) *augury*, *restoration*, *soothe*, *touch of idiocy*; **1st** (3 slots) *charm*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *soothe*; **Cantrips** (3rd) *chill touch*, *daze*, *light*, *prestidigitation*, *shield*

Bard Composition Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 22; **3rd** *counter performance*, **Cantrips** (3rd) *inspire competence*, *inspire courage*, *inspire defense* (Core Rulebook 386)

SPY

No empire would be complete without its spies. The spy is a master of infiltrating the court and blending in: they might be one of a number of nobles, a beloved confidante of the queen, or even the court jester. Spies use their skills to subtly manipulate courtiers, turn enemies against one another, and collect valuable information either for blackmail or to auction to the highest bidder.

SPY

CREATURE 6

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +17

Languages Common

Skills Deception +15, Diplomacy +13, Intimidation +15, Local Court Lore +16, Society +12, Stealth +14, Thievery +12

Str +0, **Dex** +4, **Con** +1, **Int** +2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +4

Items dagger (4), disguise kit, fine clothes, leather armor, +1 *rapier*, thieves' tools

Noble's Ally The spy has positioned themselves to seem a trusted ally, gaining a +2 circumstance bonus to Gather Information or to Make an Impression among the nobles of that court.

AC 23; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +17, **Will** +14

HP 90

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ *rapier* +16 (deadly 1d8, disarm, finesse, magical), **Damage** 1d6+7 piercing

Melee ♦ dagger +14 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+6 piercing

Hidden Blade ♦ **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The spy draws a weapon and then Strikes with it. The target of the Strike is flat-footed against the attack.

Sneak Attack The spy deals an extra 2d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.



INTRIGUING PLOTS

The royal court is filled with intrigue! Here are some examples of who might be scheming.

- The monarch's spouse or children
- The royal pet (a druid in disguise)
- The grand vizier
- Visiting ambassadors or nobles
- Palace champion
- Palace doctor
- Kitchen staff
- Court jester



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CRIMINAL SCAMS

Common scams criminals run include sending fake collectors for nonexistent charities to seek donations for the diseased and downtrodden; rigged games of chance at local fairs offering worthless prizes, and flashy sideshows concealing the work of pickpockets in the audience; and plants who offer to help travelers find accommodations but lead them to inns with exorbitant prices.

CRIMINALS

Some criminals are the desperate who have no option but to break the law to survive, while others choose a life of crime for thrills, forming gangs or underworld guilds that specialize in certain illegal ventures.

GRAVE ROBBER

Many cultures have a tradition of burying their dead with a selection of the deceased's most precious possessions, and some include gifts that are thought to provide a boon in the afterlife. Such valuables can be easy pickings for those with no respect for—or fear of—the dead.

GRAVE ROBBER

CREATURE 1

NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +5

Languages Common

Skills Crafting +6, Deception +2, Intimidation +2, Society +6, Stealth +5, Underworld Lore +6

Str +1, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** +3, **Wis** +2, **Cha** -1

Items alchemist's tools, dagger, formula book, *holy water*, shovel, studded leather armor

Infused Items A grave robber carries the following infused items: 2 lesser bottled lightnings, a lesser frost vial, and a lesser thunderstone. These items last for 24 hours, or until the next time the grave robber makes their daily preparations.

AC 17; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

HP 18

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ shovel +6, **Damage** 1d6+1 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ alchemical bomb +7 (range increment 20 feet, splash), **Damage** varies by bomb

BANDIT

By setting ambushes and traps in concealing countryside, such as forests and mountains, bandits waylay travelers and plunder their valuables before disappearing back to their wilderness hideouts.

Many bandits seek only to steal and release their victims alive, though a few prefer to leave no witnesses.

BANDIT

CREATURE 2

NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +6

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +6, Deception +5, Forest Lore +4, Intimidation +6, Stealth +8, Survival +6, Thievery +8

Str +3, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1

Items hatchet, sling (10 bullets), studded leather armor

AC 19; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +9, **Will** +6

HP 30

Bandit's Ambush When the bandit rolls initiative using Deception or Stealth, they can attempt to Demoralize one creature as a free action.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ hatchet +9 (agile, sweep), **Damage** 1d6+5 slashing

Ranged ♦ sling +9 (propulsive, range increment 50 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d6+3 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ hatchet +9 (agile, sweep, thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d6+5 slashing

Dread Striker Frightened creatures are flat-footed to the bandit.

Favored Terrain The bandit ignores the effects of non-magical difficult terrain in forests.

BANDIT

RUFFIAN

Using their strength to bully others into submission, ruffians often work as bodyguards and enforcers for powerful criminals like charlatans and fences.

RUFFIAN

CREATURE 2

NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +8

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +7, Intimidation +6, Stealth +6

Str +3, **Dex** +2, **Con** +3, **Int** -1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

Items club, sling (10 bullets), studded leather armor

AC 18; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6

HP 32

Attack of Opportunity ↻

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ club +9, **Damage** 1d6+5 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ sling +8 (propulsive, range increment 50 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d6+5 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ club +8 (thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d6+5 bludgeoning

Brutal Beating The ruffian's brutality shakes foes' confidence. When the ruffian deals damage on a critical hit, the target is frightened 1, and the ruffian can knock the target up to 10 feet away (this is forced movement).

Snagging Strike ♦ **Trigger** The ruffian has one hand free, and its target is within reach of that hand; **Effect** The ruffian makes a melee Strike while keeping one hand free. If this Strike hits, the target is flat-footed until the start of the ruffian's next turn or until it leaves the ruffian's reach, whichever comes first.

Sneak Attack The ruffian deals an extra 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

CHARLATAN

Charlatans use pretense and misdirection to swindle money and other valuables from the credulous and confused. Selling snake oil (literally or figuratively), distracting marks to pick their pockets, or faking mediumship are classic gifts.

CHARLATAN

CREATURE 3

NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +6

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +8, Deception +11, Diplomacy +9, Occultism +7, Performance +11, Society +7, Stealth +8, Thievery +8, Underworld Lore +9

Str +0, **Dex** +3, **Con** +0, **Int** +2, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +4

Items disguise kit, lute, sap, shortsword, thieves' tools

Versatile Performance The charlatan can use Performance instead of Diplomacy to Make an Impression and instead of Intimidation to Demoralize. They can also use an acting Performance instead of Deception to Impersonate.

AC 18; **Fort** +5, **Ref** +8, **Will** +10

HP 40

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ shortsword +10 (agile, versatile S), **Damage** 1d6+2 piercing

Melee ♦ sap +7 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d6+2 bludgeoning

Occult Spontaneous Spells DC 20, attack +10; **2nd** (2 slots) *charm*, *illusory disguise*, *invisibility*; **1st** (3 slots) *illusory disguise*, *magic aura*, *unseen servant*, *ventriloquism*;

Cantrips (2nd) *daze*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*

Bard Composition Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 19; **1st** *counter performance* (Core Rulebook 386); **Cantrips (1st)** *inspire courage* (Core Rulebook 386)

Sneak Attack The charlatan deals an extra 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.



MORE SCAMS

- Fraudsters sell fake alchemical items, medicines, charms, talismans, or other minor magics.
- Unscrupulous moneylenders take advantage of lax business regulations to employ predatory repayment terms.
- Phony fortune-tellers and mediums use cold-reading techniques to lull gullible marks.



CHARLATAN

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FANTASY CRIMES

While many crimes in *Pathfinder* are similar to crimes in the real world, certain crimes are possible only in a world of magic. These include using magic to win a wager, malicious uses of curses, violating autonomy with enchantment magic, falsifying divinations, violating privacy with divinations, or trespassing via teleportation.

BURGLAR

Burglars specialize in breaking and entering to rob homes and businesses. These criminals focus on gaining access to secure buildings and bypassing traps and other security measures while remaining undetected all the while.

BURGLAR

CREATURE 4

NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID
Perception +10 (+11 to find traps)

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +10, Athletics +8, Deception +7, Society +7, Stealth +12, Thievery +12 (can Disable traps that require master proficiency), Underworld Lore +7

Str +2, Dex +4, Con +1, Int +1, Wis +2, Cha +1

Items climbing kit, composite shortbow (10 arrows), lesser darkvision elixir, leather armor, sap, thieves' tools

AC 21 (22 vs. traps); Fort +7, Ref +12, Will +10; +1 circumstance to all saves vs. traps
HP 60

Deny Advantage The burglar isn't flat-footed to creatures of 4th level or lower that are hidden, undetected, flanking, or using surprise attack.

Nimble Dodge **Trigger** The burglar is targeted with a melee or ranged attack by an attacker it can see; **Effect** The burglar gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against the triggering attack.

Speed 30 feet

Melee **◆** shortsword +14 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d6+6 piercing

Melee **◆** sap +12 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d6+4 bludgeoning

Ranged **◆** composite shortbow +14 (deadly 1d10, propulsive, range increment 60 feet, reload 0), **Damage** 1d6+4 piercing

Mobility When the burglar Strides half their Speed or less, that movement does not trigger reactions.

Sneak Attack The burglar deals an extra 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

Surprise Attack On the first round of combat, if the burglar rolls Deception or Stealth for initiative, creatures that haven't acted are flat-footed to them.

FENCE

The longer criminals hold on to stolen loot, the greater the chance they will get caught. Fences make themselves indispensable in the underworld by paying for stolen goods in order to resell them later, whether through a seemingly legitimate business or to a closed group of elite buyers.

FENCE

CREATURE 5

NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID
Perception +11

Languages Common

Skills Accounting Lore +13, Acrobatics +10, Crafting +13, Deception +13, Diplomacy +11, Intimidation +11, Society +11, Stealth +10, Thievery +10, Underworld Lore +15

Str +0, Dex +3, Con +0, Int +4, Wis +2, Cha +4

Items dagger (10), lesser darkvision elixir, disguise kit, *bird feather token*, lesser smokestick (2), shortsword, thieves' tools

Fence's Eye Fences live by their ability to recognize a viable trade. They can use Underworld Lore to identify an item's value and Identify Magic on an item.

They gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Underworld Lore checks when doing so, and to Underworld Lore checks to determine whether an item was stolen, whether a stolen item would be too recognizable to easily move, and who would be interested in purchasing such an item.

BURGLAR

AC 20; Fort +9, Ref +12, Will +15

HP 70

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ shortsword +12 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d6+5 piercing

Melee ♦ dagger +12 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+5 piercing

Ranged ♦ dagger +12 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+2 piercing

Quick Rummage ♦ The fence always has a few items close at hand. The fence Interacts to draw a weapon or item that takes a single action to activate, and then Strikes with the weapon or Activates the Item.

Scoundrel's Feint When the fence successfully Feints, their target is flat-footed against the fence's attacks until the end of the fence's next turn. On a critical success, the target is flat-footed against all attacks until the end of the fence's next turn.

Sneak Attack The fence deals an extra 2d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

ASSASSIN

Assassins commit murder, either for pay or due to their belief in a cause, such as a religion or a political movement. Some assassins work alone and choose their own victims. Others are members of assassins' guilds, organizations that accept contracts to kill in return for money, favors, or both.

ASSASSIN

CREATURE 8

NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +16

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +17, Athletics +13, Deception +12, Diplomacy +10, Intimidation +10, Medicine +14, Society +12, Stealth +19, Survival +12, Thievery +15, Underworld Lore +14

Str +3, **Dex** +5, **Con** +2, **Int** +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

Items +1 striking composite shortbow (20 arrows), lesser darkvision elixir, giant centipede venom (3), invisibility potion, leather armor, +1 rapier, simple injury poison (8 doses, 2d4 poison damage), sleep poison (2)

Swift Sneak The assassin can move their full Speed when Sneaking.

AC 26; Fort +12, Ref +19, Will +14

HP 130

Deny Advantage The assassin isn't flat-footed to creatures of 8th level or lower that are hidden, undetected, flanking, or using surprise attack.

Nimble Dodge ⤵ **Trigger** The assassin is targeted with a melee or ranged attack by an attacker they can see;

Effect The assassin gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against the triggering attack.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ rapier +18 (deadly 1d8, disarm, finesse, magical), **Damage** 1d6+8 piercing

Ranged ♦ composite shortbow +20 (deadly 2d10, magical, propulsive, range increment 60 feet, reload 0), **Damage** 2d6+4 piercing

Poison Weapon ♦ (manipulate) **Requirements** The assassin is wielding a piercing or slashing weapon and has a free hand; **Effect** The assassin applies a poison to the weapon.

Quick Draw ♦ The assassin Interacts to draw a weapon, then Strikes with that weapon.

Sneak Attack The assassin deals an extra 2d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

Surprise Attack On the first round of combat, creatures that haven't acted yet are flat-footed to the assassin.



PROTECTION MONEY

Criminal organizations often find it easier to demand protection money from locals than go to the trouble of stealing it. "Protection" includes an implicit assumption that those who pay up are safe from those criminals, and some also promise retribution against other criminals.



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SWAPPING DEITIES

Customize an acolyte or priest by matching their deity's alignment and favored weapon, adding the deity's divine skill at +14 (or +7), and swapping spells. An example appears on the facing page. (An acolyte gains only the 1st-level spells, domain spell, and cantrips, and has two 1st-level *heal* spells instead of three 3rd-level *heal* spells.) If you swap *harm* spells for *heal*, replace Healing Hands with the Selective Energy cleric feat.

DEVOTEES

Religions inspire devout individuals to uphold their tenets. Many of these devotees seek to bring respite and hope, but others have darker motives.

ACOLYTE

Underling clerics are still learning the tenets of their faith and answer to a superior priest. Their days are spent in devotion and learning, sequestered in temples.

ACOLYTE OF NETHYS

CREATURE 1

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +7

Languages Common

Skills Arcana +5, Crafting +5, Diplomacy +4, Occultism +5, Religion +7

Str +1, **Dex** +2, **Con** -1, **Int** +2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +1

Items crossbow (10 bolts), religious symbol of Nethys, religious text of Nethys, staff

AC 15; **Fort** +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +9

HP 16

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ staff +4 (two-hand d8), **Damage** 1d4+1 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ crossbow +5 (range increment 120 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d8 piercing

Divine Prepared Spells DC 17, attack +9; **1st** *harm*, *heal* (×2), *magic missile*; **Cantrips** (1st) *chill touch*, *detect magic*, *light*, *prestidigitation*, *read aura*, *shield*

Cleric Domain Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 17; **1st** *cry of destruction* (Core Rulebook 390)

PROPHET

The gods occasionally send messages in dreams to individuals who wander the lands, gaining followers with their oratorical abilities. Some prophets have not received true divine missives, but have misinterpreted normal dreams.

PROPHET

CREATURE 2

CN **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +10

Languages Common

Skills Diplomacy +8, Performance +8 (+10 to spout prophecy), Religion +7, Survival +7

Str +2, **Dex** +1, **Con** +0, **Int** +1, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +4

Items flail, manifesto (functions as religious text), pouch of rocks, robes

AC 17; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +7, **Will** +11

HP 24

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ flail +8 (disarm, sweep, trip), **Damage** 1d6+2 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ fist +8 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4+2 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ rock +7 (thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d4+2 bludgeoning

Divine Spontaneous Spells DC 18, attack +10; **1st** (4 slots) *bles*, *heal*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *sanctuary*; **Cantrips** (1st) *daze*, *detect magic*, *guidance*, *know direction*, *light*, *prestidigitation*, *read aura*

Cleric Domain Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 18; **1st** *read fate* (Core Rulebook 395)

ZEALOT

Zealots ferret out plots against their religion and seek justice for their church's followers. This zealot serves Asmodeus, but others might serve Abadar, Calistria, Iomedae, Norgorber, Pharasma, Sarenrae, or Zon-Kuthon. They often ride a war horse (Bestiary 209) wearing light barding. This horse is an additional monster in the fight.

ACOLYTE

ZEALOT OF ASMODEUS

CREATURE 4

NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +9

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +9, Deception +10, Intimidation +10, Religion +10, Society +7

Str +4, Dex +1, Con +1, Int +0, Wis +3, Cha +2

Items composite shortbow (20 arrows), half plate, mace, steel shield (Hardness 5, HP 20, BT 10)

AC 22 (24 with shield raised); Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +11

HP 58

Shield Block

Swear Vengeance **Trigger** A creature the zealot can see damages a follower of Asmodeus other than the zealot; **Effect** The zealot gains the effect of a 1st-level *true strike* spell. If the zealot makes an attack roll against anyone other than the triggering creature, the *true strike* ends with no effect.

Speed 20 feet

Melee **◆** mace +12 (shove), **Damage** 1d8+4 bludgeoningRanged **◆** composite shortbow +9 (deadly 1d10, propulsive, range increment 60 feet, reload 0), **Damage** 1d6+2 piercing

Divine Prepared Spells DC 19, attack +11; **2nd** *harm* (×3), *restoration*, see *invisibility*, *shield other*; **1st** *detect alignment*, *magic weapon*, *spirit link*; **Cantrips** (2nd) *detect magic*, *divine lance*, *forbidding ward*, *read aura*, *sigil*

Channel Smite **◆◆** (divine, necromancy) The zealot expends a prepared *harm* spell and makes a melee Strike. Instead of the normal effect of the spell, its negative damage is added to the Strike's damage.

Deadly Simplicity The zealot's mace deals 1d8 damage instead of 1d6.

PRIEST

Cloistered priests safeguard their temples and communities. They are the stalwart keepers of their god's tenets, devoted to spreading the word. Their guidance or healing services come at the cost of a donation.

PRIEST OF PHARASMA

CREATURE 6

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +14

Languages Common

Skills Diplomacy +12, Medicine +14, Religion +14, Society +11, Survival +12

Str +3, Dex +3, Con +1, Int +0, Wis +4, Cha +2

Items +1 dagger, religious symbol of Pharasma

AC 21; Fort +11, Ref +11, Will +14

HP 80

Speed 25 feet

Melee **◆** dagger +13 (agile, magical, versatile S), **Damage** 1d6+5 piercingRanged **◆** dagger +13 (agile, magical, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d6+5 piercing

Divine Prepared Spells DC 24, attack +16; **3rd** *circle of protection*, *heal* (×3), *searing light* (×2); **2nd** *gentle repose*, *silence*, *spiritual weapon*; **1st** *disrupting weapons*, *mindlink*, *spirit link*; **Cantrips** (3rd) *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *light*, *read aura*, *shield*

Cleric Domain Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 24; **3rd** *death's call* (Core Rulebook 391)

Divine Rituals DC 24; *consecrate*

Healing Hands When the priest casts *heal*, they roll d10s instead of d8s.

Steady Spellcasting If another creature's reaction would disrupt the priest's spellcasting action, the priest attempts a DC 15 flat check. If the priest succeeds, their action isn't disrupted.



SPELL SWAP EXAMPLE

To make a NE acolyte or priest of Urgathoa, you can use these spells.

3rd *bind undead*, *circle of protection*, *harm* (×3), *vampiric touch*; **2nd** *dispel magic*, *false life*, *ghoulish cravings*; **1st** *bane*, *fear*, *ray of enfeeblement*; **Cantrips** *chill touch*, *detect magic*, *divine lance*, *guidance*, *shield*; **Cleric Domain Spell** *undead's blessing* (Core Rulebook 398)



PRIEST

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BRAVING THE MOB

A mob is a violent crowd (Core Rulebook 514) that works as greater difficult terrain and hazardous terrain, dealing 1d4 damage for each square entered. A creature can spend a single action to attempt a DC 16 Intimidation check, clearing the mob from all squares adjacent to them on a success (or all squares within 10 feet on a critical success). This action has the concentrate, emotion, manipulate, and mental traits.

DOWNTRODDEN

Unfortunately, every society has people living on its fringes. While good communities work to grant aid and respite to their downtrodden, sometimes—due to economic downturn, famine, or war—the ranks of the less fortunate exceed the community's capacity to support them. In heartless neutral and evil societies, poverty is seen as an inevitability that can never be truly eradicated, or even worse, as a tool to be manipulated for political gain.

BEGGAR

Wherever there is poverty, there are beggars. Beggars are truly the downtrodden of society—folks who have been cast out into the streets due to a variety of setbacks or the weight of circumstance. Some beggars work for underworld organizations as lookouts, spies, or even hired muscle on the cheap—sometimes by choice, but often not.

BEGGAR

CREATURE -1

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +3

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +3, Deception +3, Diplomacy +3, Stealth +5, Underworld Lore +2

Str +1, Dex +3, Con +2, Int +0, Wis +1, Cha +1

AC 15; Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +3

HP 10

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ fist +5 (agile, nonlethal), Damage 1d4+1 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ rock +5 (thrown 10 feet), Damage 1d4+1 bludgeoning

Beat a Retreat ♦♦ The beggar Strides three times and gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC during those actions.

COMMONER

Though not every commoner is downtrodden, many live hard lives of toil as they work to keep their families fed and housed in relative comfort. While many commoners are just simple folks who keep to themselves, sometimes commoners rebel, either rising up to face their oppressors or persuaded or even duped into joining nefarious plans and criminal conspiracies. Commoners benefit from power in numbers, and a crowd of commoners can accomplish a great deal more than their rulers often expect.

COMMONER

CREATURE -1

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +3

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +5, Lore (any one related to their trade) +6, Society +2

Str +3, Dex +1, Con +2, Int +0, Wis +1, Cha +0

Items sickle

AC 13; Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +3

HP 10

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ sickle +5 (agile, trip), Damage 1d4+2 slashing

Ranged ♦ rock +3 (thrown 10 feet), Damage 1d4+2 bludgeoning

Power of the Mob When three or more commoners are adjacent to each other, each commoner gets a +1 circumstance bonus to Athletic checks to Shove, attack rolls, and damage rolls.

BEGGAR

URCHIN

Although their escapades might be notorious, few urchins are thrill-seekers. For some urchins, when begging alone is not enough to fill their bellies, theft becomes a viable survival tactic. Many underworld powers also use urchins as spies and messengers, while training them to become future pickpockets, burglars, and foot soldiers.

URCHIN

CREATURE -1

N **SMALL** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +3

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +5, Deception +4, Society +3, Stealth +5, Survival +3, Thievery +7

Str -1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +0, **Int** +1, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +2

Items shiv

AC 15; **Fort** +2, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3

HP 8

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ shiv +5 (agile), **Damage** 1d4-1 piercing

Melee ♦ fist +5 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4-1 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ rock +5 (thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d4-1 bludgeoning

Collaborative Thievery The urchin gains a +1 circumstance bonus to Steal or Palm an Object while within 10 feet of an ally who has the pickpocket ability.

Pickpocket The urchin can Steal or Palm an Object that's closely guarded without taking the usual -5 penalty. They can Steal objects that would be extremely noticeable or time-consuming to remove (like worn shoes, armor, or actively wielded objects).

PRISONER

Most who end up in a jail, dungeon, or prison are just biding their time until their imprisonment ends, trying to find ways to make it through interminable days of boredom and deprivation. Some, however, may use their time on the inside to strengthen their criminal connections. Using force and intimidation to gain status among other prisoners, they create makeshift weapons to take down their enemies and give them an edge if escape becomes possible. Even for prisoners who don't become involved in the world of prison politics, learning to stand up for themselves and projecting an air of toughness can become essential for survival in a place where people have little left to lose.

PRISONER

CREATURE 1

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +6

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +6, Intimidation +3, Stealth +7, Thievery +7

Str +3, **Dex** +4, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

Items shiv

AC 17; **Fort** +4, **Ref** +9, **Will** +6

HP 17

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ shiv +7 (agile), **Damage** 1d4+3 piercing

Melee ♦ fist +7 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4+3 piercing

Sneak Attack The prisoner deals an extra 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

Surprise Attack On the first round of combat, creatures that haven't acted yet are flat-footed to the prisoner.

You're Next ⤿ (emotion, fear, mental) **Trigger** The prisoner reduces a creature to 0 Hit Points; **Effect** The prisoner attempts an Intimidation check with a +2 circumstance bonus to Demoralize a single creature it can see and that can see them.



WORD ON THE STREET

Privy to all sorts of conversations from passersby, the downtrodden can provide eyes and ears on the street. Finding a reliable contact can give a character a circumstance bonus to checks to Gather Information if they return to that source. This bonus is usually +1, but could be +2 or +3 if the contact lingers in a market where influential politicians shop, sweeps a noble estate, or the like.

Befriending NPCs in advance can also help the heroes in action scenes. A friendly urchin might show a character a shortcut to catch an escaping enemy, a crowd of fans who frequent a bard's performances might throw rocks to distract someone trying to fight the bard, and so on.



URCHIN

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TIPS FROM THE GUIDE

You might allow PCs who Follow the Expert when led by a guide to continue to add their level to the skill check for some time afterward: 1 hour if the guide is an expert, 1 day for master, or 1 week for legendary. (The guide here has expert Athletics, Scouting Lore, and Survival.) A character can have this benefit for only one skill at a time.

EXPLORERS

The world is a wide, open place fraught with peril and adventure. Explorers use their knowledge of nature and survival skills to see every corner of the land.

TORCHBEARER

Torchbearers carry a light sources for seasoned explorers and serve as apprentices.

TORCHBEARER

CREATURE 0

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +5

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +5, Architecture Lore +2, Athletics +4, Stealth +5, Survival +3

Str +2, Dex +3, Con +1, Int +0, Wis +1, Cha +1

Items climbing kit, dagger, hand crossbow (20 bolts), tindertwig (5), torch (4)

AC 15; Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +5

HP 15

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ torch +7, Damage 1d6+2 bludgeoning plus 1 fire

Melee ♦ dagger +5 (agile, versatile S), Damage 1d4+2 piercing

Ranged ♦ hand crossbow +5 (range increment 60 feet, reload 1), Damage 1d6 piercing

Torch Combatant A torchbearer is adept at attacking with torches and deals 1 persistent fire damage when they critically hit with a torch.

CHRONICLER

Exploration means very little if no account of the details exist. Members of adventuring bands cherish chroniclers who record tales of their deeds.

CHRONICLER

CREATURE 3

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +14

Languages Common

Skills Map Lore +17, Nature +14, Scribing Lore +17, Society +12, Survival +14

Str +2, Dex +2, Con +1, Int +4, Wis +4, Cha +0

Items crossbow (20 bolts), dagger, journal, leather armor, maps, scroll of acid arrow, scroll of heal, staff

AC 18; Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +9

HP 45

Live to Tell the Tale ↻ Frequency once per day; Trigger The chronicler is dying;

Effect The chronicler reduces their dying condition by 1. If the chronicler is no longer dying, they remain unconscious for at least 1 hour or until they regain 1 Hit Point.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +7 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), Damage 1d4+2 piercing

Melee ♦ staff +7 (two-hand d8), Damage 1d4+2 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ crossbow +7 (range increment 120 feet, reload 1), Damage 1d8 piercing

Primal Prepared Spells DC 20, attack +12; 2nd entangle, flaming sphere; 1st fleet step, longstrider, pass without trace; Cantrips (2nd) know direction, light, ray of frost, sigil, tanglefoot

Scroll Mastery The chronicler can activate any scroll of a 2nd-level spell or lower as if they had the spell on their spell list, regardless of its magical tradition.

GUIDE

Guides bring travelers, tourists, and adventurers into the wondrous natural world, using their expertise to avoid deadly monsters and gruesome hazards.



CHRONICLER

GUIDE

CREATURE 4

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +14

Languages Common


Skills Athletics +14, Scouting Lore +12, Survival +12, Stealth +11

Str +4, Dex +1, Con +2, Int +1, Wis +3, Cha +0



Items composite shortbow (40 arrows), greataxe, scale mail


AC 21; Fort +12, Ref +11, Will +14

HP 60

Guide's Warning  **Trigger** The guide is about to roll a Perception or Survival check to determine their initiative; **Effect** The guide visually or audibly warns allies, granting them a +1 circumstance bonus to their initiative rolls. Depending on how the guide warns allies, this action has the auditory or visual trait.

Speed 25 feet

Melee  greataxe +12 (sweep), **Damage** 1d12+6 slashingRanged  composite shortbow +9 (deadly 1d10, propulsive, range increment 60 feet, reload 0), **Damage** 1d6+2 piercing

Guiding Words  The guide points out a weakness of a creature within 30 feet. The guide and all allies that can hear or see the guide gain a +1 status bonus to attack and damage rolls against that creature until the beginning of the guide's next turn. The guide adds an extra 1d6 precision damage to their weapon and unarmed attacks that hit that creature during the duration.

TOMB RAIDER

Great treasure awaits those willing to explore the hazardous depths of the world's ancient tombs and forgotten dungeons. Some tomb raiders seek riches of bygone eras; others recover pieces of history thought lost to the sands of time.

TOMB RAIDER

CREATURE 5

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +13

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +13, Architecture Lore +11, Athletics +13, Deception +7, Engineering Lore +11, Society +9, Stealth +11, Thievery +13

Str +4, Dex +4, Con +1, Int +2, Wis +2, Cha +0



Items climbing kit, hand crossbow (20 bolts), +1 kukri


Hazard Spotter The tomb raider automatically attempts a secret Perception check to notice a hazard when they are within 10 feet of the hazard.

AC 21; Fort +10, Ref +15, Will +11

HP 75

Speed 25 feet, climb 15 feet

Melee  kukri +15 (agile, magical, trip), **Damage** 1d6+7 slashingRanged  hand crossbow +15 (range increment 60 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d6+3 piercing

Trick Attack  The tomb raider musters their guile to attempt a clever attack that catches their foe unprepared. The tomb raider chooses one of their weapons. The next attack with that weapon deals an extra 2d6 precision damage. In addition, the tomb raider can Interact to draw the weapon (or to reload it if they choose the hand crossbow).



PATHFINDER CHRONICLES

The Pathfinder Society's quarterly compilation includes outlandish tales like the following.

- A mount gleams of silver, its inhabitants beings born of metal.
- A hedge maze extends to faraway nations and distant worlds.
- In faraway chasms, the haunted clockwork wails in a thousand voices.

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GUIDE



PENALTIES FOR POACHING

Punishment for poaching on noble land can be vicious. Maiming poachers by removing fingers is a common practice. Crueler punishments include snaring poachers in their own traps and leaving them helpless, or binding them in the bloody skins of their catch and setting dogs to chase them through the woods.

FORESTERS

From the managed and cultivated forests that support villages to the tree-covered crown lands where only nobles and their servants are permitted to hunt, forests provide. To communities, forests provide fuel, food, medicine, and raw materials, while royally protected forests provide food for the nobles' table and a source of entertainment in the form of organized hunts. Even the ancient woods untouched by mortal hand or blade provide bards with settings where legends happened and could happen again. Many find the forest depths unsettling, but others live their lives among the trees and alongside the creatures that make their homes there.

POACHER

Some forests are protected by kings, others only by wild things. Laws against hunting may protect the private reserves of nobles or guard the viability of animal populations of shared forests during specific seasons. Poachers violate those laws—sometimes out of greed, sometimes out of desperation, and sometimes for sport. Although penalties against poaching often include public shaming (see Penalties for Poaching), in lean times a successful poacher is a local hero.

POACHER

CREATURE 2

NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +9

Languages Common

Skills Crafting +4, Deception +4, Nature +7, Stealth +8, Survival +7

Str +2, **Dex** +4, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +0

Items club, composite shortbow (20 arrows), padded armor, snare kit

Forager While using Survival to Subsist, if the hunter rolls a failure or a critical failure, they get a success instead. If the hunter rolls a success, they can provide food for 4 additional creatures that eat about as much as a human, or 8 creatures on a critical success.

Snare Crafting The poacher can use the Crafting skill to create the following snares: alarm snare, hampering snare, marking snare, and signaling snare. The poacher can create four snares each day without paying for the materials, using 3 Interact actions to set up each snare.

AC 19; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +10, **Will** +7

HP 30

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ club +8, **Damage** 1d6+5 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ composite shortbow +10 (deadly 1d10, propulsive, range increment 60 feet, reload 0), **Damage** 1d6+3 piercing

Hunt Prey ♦ (concentrate) The poacher designates a single creature they can see and hear, or one they're Tracking, as their prey. The poacher gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Perception checks to Seek the prey and to Survival checks to Track the prey.

The first time the poacher hits the designated prey in a round, they deal an additional 1d8 precision damage. The poacher also ignores the penalty for making ranged attacks within their second range increment. These effects last until the poacher uses Hunt Prey again.

TRACKER

The forest offers dangerous creatures—whether they walk on four legs or two—a place to hide. Dim light, low brush, and fallen leaves conspire to hide their trails. Given these poor conditions, an unskilled eye might spot a sign or two of a creature's passing, but only a skilled tracker can identify several such signs and discern their relationship to each other, connecting one to the next

POACHER

until they form a trail of prints, scat, fur, feathers, and blood that leads to the quarry's lair.

TRACKER

CREATURE 3

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +13

Languages Common

Skills Forest Lore +5, Nature +11, Stealth +9, Survival +13

Str +2, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +0

Items composite longbow (60 arrows), leather armor, staff

Forager As poacher, but the tracker feeds 16 additional creatures, or 32 on a critical success.

Master Tracker The tracker can Track while moving at full speed.

AC 20; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +11, **Will** +9

HP 45

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ staff +9 (two-hand d8), **Damage** 1d4+4 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ composite longbow +11 (deadly 1d10, propulsive, range increment 100 feet, reload 0, volley 30 feet), **Damage** 1d8+3 piercing

Hunt Prey ♦ (concentrate) As poacher (page 218).

HUNTER

As is reflected in the many depictions of an elk-headed Erastil, god of the hunt, the hunter is very much a creature of the forest, known by the forest and familiar with every aspect of it. After all, the final determination of who is the hunter and who is prey often depends on who is able to make an ally of the terrain.

HUNTER

CREATURE 7

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +17

Languages Common

Skills Forest Lore +13, Medicine +15, Nature +17, Stealth +17, Survival +17

Str +4, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +0

Items +1 composite longbow, dagger, leather armor, shortsword

Forager As poacher, but the hunter feeds 16 additional creatures, or 32 on a critical success.

Forest Walker The hunter ignores the effects of difficult terrain from a forest environment. They can Sneak through underbrush without the need to attempt a Stealth check as long as the hunter moves no more than 5 feet at a time and is not within 10 feet of an enemy at any point during their movement.

AC 25; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +17, **Will** +15

HP 115

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +18 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+9 piercing

Melee ♦ shortsword +18 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d6+9 piercing

Ranged ♦ composite longbow +18 (deadly 1d10, magical, propulsive, range increment 100 feet, reload 0, volley 30 feet), **Damage** 1d8+8 piercing

Hunt Prey ♦ (concentrate) As poacher, but for 1d8 precision damage.



FAMED FORESTS

The **Verduran Forest** is the largest woodland on the continent of Avistan; the druids and rangers of the Wildwood Lodge earned the forest great autonomy through a thousand-year treaty. The

Forest of Spirits stretches over a thousand miles of Tian Xia and is the primeval birthplace of the nature spirits known as kami.

The **Fangwood** in Nirmathas and the Gravelands is home to a secret village of druids, named Crystalhurst, and to one of the most powerful green dragons in the world. The terrible Darkblight devastated the 7,000-year-old fey court that once guarded the wood. The **Fierani Forest** covers the majority of the elven nation of Kyonin and borders Tanglebriar, home to the Fierani rangers' great nemesis, the demon Treerazer.



HUNTER

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MEDICAL SERVICE PRICES

The physician and surgeon are masters of Medicine; the apothecary and plague doctor are experts. Plague doctors charge five times this rate, and surgeons 10 times.

Identify Affliction: 1 sp.

Treat Wounds: 2 sp.

Treat Disease: 1 gp.

First Aid or Treating a Poison: 1 sp.

HEALERS

The world is a dangerous place. Thankfully, there are those who devote their lives to easing the pain and suffering of others.

APOTHECARY

Surrounded by bottles and bins of crushed herbs, curative minerals, and potent extracts, the apothecary skillfully combines materials into unguents and medicines. For encounters involving making medicine or alchemical contests, the apothecary is a 3rd-level challenge.

APOTHECARY

CREATURE -1

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +5

Languages Common

Skills Crafting +5 (+8 for alchemy and medication), Medicine +10, Nature +8

Str +0, **Dex** +1, **Con** +1, **Int** +3, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +1

Items lesser acid flask (2), dagger, minor elixir of life (2), healer's tools, leather apron (functions as padded armor), mortar and pestle

Medical Wisdom The apothecary can identify the effect of any alchemical composition or medical ingredient using only their senses. This typically takes 1 minute.

AC 14; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5; +1 circumstance to all saves vs. poisons

HP 9; **Resistances** poison 2

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ stone pestle +4, **Damage** 1d6 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ fist +5 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ acid flask +5 (range increment 20 feet, splash), **Damage** 1 acid plus 1d6 persistent acid and 1 splash acid

PHYSICIAN

The art of medicine is a blend of the intellectual and the practical, concerned with how diseases work and how to prevent them. The physician can be found consulting well-thumbed tomes while meticulously examining patients to better understand their condition, before determining the most effective treatment. For medical matters, the physician is a 4th-level challenge.

PHYSICIAN

CREATURE -1

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +6 (+8 to notice ailments)

Languages Common

Skills Diplomacy +8, Medicine +12, Society +10

Str -1, **Dex** +1, **Con** +1, **Int** +4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +2

Items minor elixirs of life (2), healer's tools, medical textbook

Bedside Manner A physician has a +2 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy checks to Make an Impression on or make a Request of a diseased, poisoned, or wounded creature.

Doctor's Hand When the physician rolls a critical failure on a check to Treat Disease, Treat Poison, or Treat Wounds, they get a failure instead.

AC 13; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +8

HP 9

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ fist +5 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4-1 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ medical textbook +5 (nonlethal, thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d4-1 bludgeoning

SURGEON

The surgeon specializes in the physical alteration of the body to prevent the spread of disease, removing necrotic and decaying flesh to help the whole to survive. Few

PHYSICIAN

healers know the science of anatomy and physiology better than the surgeon. While their expertise is of grave importance in the medical world, the downside is that when one is in need of their talents, it is likely the complaint is serious. In medical matters, a surgeon is a 6th-level challenge.

SURGEON

CREATURE 2

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +14

Languages Common

Skills Crafting+10, Diplomacy+8, Medicine +16

Str +1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +0

Items healer's tools, scalpel (3)

Doctor's Hand When the surgeon rolls a critical failure on a check to Treat Disease, Treat Poison, or Treat Wounds, they get a failure instead.

AC 17; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +7, **Will** +10

HP 30

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ scalpel +11 (agile, versatile P), **Damage** 1d4+1 slashing

Ranged ♦ scalpel +11 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile P), **Damage** 1d4+1 slashing

Medical Malpractice ♦ The surgeon attempts a Medicine check against the Fortitude DC of one living creature they can see within 60 feet. On a success, the surgeon's melee Strikes deal an extra 1d6 precision damage against that creature (2d6 on a critical success) until 1 minute passes or the surgeon critically hits that creature, whichever comes first. Using this action again designates a new target and ends the effect for any previous target. A surgeon can target an individual creature no more than once per day with this ability.

PLAGUE DOCTOR

These healers, often seen wearing distinctive masks and burning powders to defend against airborne plagues, are as much feared as they are respected. To see a plague doctor signals that disease has infested the land—and that it might have already taken hold. Despite their devoted work in curing the untouchable, they are sometimes treated with suspicion, as if they are somehow the cause of the plague.

PLAGUE DOCTOR

CREATURE 5

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +13

Languages Common

Skills Intimidation +9, Medicine +13, Plague Lore +13, Religion +13

Str +0, **Dex** +1, **Con** +4, **Int** +2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

Items crossbow (10 bolts), healer's tools, *minor potion of healing* (4), staff, studded leather

AC 20; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +8, **Will** +13

HP 73

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ staff +9 (two-hand d8), **Damage** 1d4 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ crossbow +10 (range increment 120 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d8 piercing

Divine Prepared Spells DC 23; **3rd** *heal* (×3), *neutralize poison*, *remove disease*; **2nd** *death knell*, *remove fear*, *restoration*; **1st** *detect poison*, *purify food and drink* (×2);

Cantrips (3rd) *guidance*, *light*, *message*, *sigil*, *stabilize*

Cleric Domain Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 23; **3rd** *healer's blessing* (Core Rulebook 393)

Healing Hands When the plague doctor casts *heal*, they roll d10s instead of d8s.

Improved Communal Healing When the plague doctor casts *heal* targeting a single creature, the plague doctor also restores Hit Points equal to the spell's level to themselves or any other creature within range of the spell.



AILMENTS

Common diseases appear on page 118. These can be treated by most healers, though they may have longer-term physiological impacts. For unusual conditions, like ghoul fever or mummy rot, you might impose penalties on a normal healer attempting to remedy them.



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LABORER GAMES

Laborers tend to play games when the work is slow or while on break.

Common games include Gremlin Row, which involves rolling dice and trying to match them, as well as Fishing with Fire, in which players try to get all the cards of one type from a deck without losing all of their own cards and getting "burned."



SERVANT

LABORERS

Every day, laborers perform backbreaking physical work.

SERVANT

Maids, butlers, and majordomos alike, servants are skilled at keeping a home in working order and protecting the interests of their employers.

SERVANT

CREATURE -1

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +9

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +5, Diplomacy +4, Household Lore +4, Society +2

Str +1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +2

Items cutlery (10), servant's uniform, serving platter (Hardness 3, HP 6, BT 3)

AC 15 (16 with platter raised); **Fort** +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3

HP 9

Raise a Shield ♦ The serving platter has the same statistics as a buckler, but requires a hand to hold.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ cutlery +5 (agile, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+1 piercing

Ranged ♦ cutlery +5 (agile, thrown 15 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+1 piercing

DOCKHAND

Working to load and unload cargo from ships, dockhands are considered unruly, but many stay focused and work hard until the job is done. Some do celebrate the end of their work day with rowdy drinking.

DOCKHAND

CREATURE 0

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +3

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +3, Athletics +5, Intimidation +3, Labor Lore +4

Str +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +1

Items empty bottle (3), leather armor, whiskey (1 bottle)

AC 14; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3

HP 20

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ fist +7 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4+3 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ bottle +5 (agile, thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 1d6+3 bludgeoning

Heft Crate ♦♦ (manipulate) **Requirements** The dockhand is adjacent to a crate; **Effect** The dockhand picks up a crate and heaves it up to 15 feet. Upon landing, the crate breaks open in a 5-foot burst. Each creature within the area takes 2d6 bludgeoning damage (DC 13 basic Reflex save), and the area becomes difficult terrain until cleared.

Swig ♦♦ (manipulate) The dockhand Interacts to either draw a bottle of alcohol or pick up a nearby unattended bottle of alcohol and drink the whole thing. For 1 minute, the dockhand gains a +2 item bonus to melee damage rolls and saving throws against fear, but they become clumsy 1.

FARMER

Workers of the fields, vineyards, and orchards of the world, farmers are known for their rugged endurance and their skill with both plants and animals.

FARMER

CREATURE 0

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +6

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +5, Farming Lore +4, Nature +4, Survival +4

Str +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

Items apple (4), leather armor, pitchfork

AC 14; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4

HP 20

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ pitchfork +6 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 1d6+3 piercing

Ranged ♦ apple +5 (agile, nonlethal, thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 1d4+3 bludgeoning

Pitch Bale ♦ **Requirements** The farmer's last action was a successful pitchfork Strike;

Effect The farmer moves the creature they hit with their pitchfork up to 5 feet, and the target falls prone. The target can attempt a DC 13 Reflex save to avoid falling prone, and avoids being moved altogether on a critical success.

MINER

Miners explore deep underground in search of minerals and rare materials, taking numerous precautions to keep themselves safe.

MINER

CREATURE 0

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +6

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +3, Athletics +6, Mining Lore +4, Survival +4

Str +2, **Dex** +1, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

Items hammer, lantern, miner's harness (functions as leather armor), pick, piton (5)

AC 14; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4

HP 20

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ pick +6 (fatal 1d10), **Damage** 1d6+2 piercing

Piton Pin ♦ (attack) **Requirements** The miner has their hammer in hand; **Effect** The miner interacts to draw a piton, then hammers it into a creature to pin them in place, attempting an Athletics check against the target's Reflex DC. On a hit, the target is immobilized until it removes the piton with a successful DC 10 Athletics check made as an Interact action.

GRAVEDIGGER

An often-overlooked group of laborers, gravediggers have a reputation for being as quiet and grim as their workplace. They are commonly strong and tough from their long hours of backbreaking labor, and they tend to have a unique perspective on life and death.

GRAVEDIGGER

CREATURE 1

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +6

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +7, Graveyard Lore +4, Religion +4, Stealth +4

Str +4, **Dex** +1, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

Items bull's-eye lantern (2 oils), gravedigger's garb (functions as leather armor), religious symbol of Pharasma, shovel

AC 15; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +4, **Will** +7

HP 22; **Resistances** negative 2

Speed 25 feet

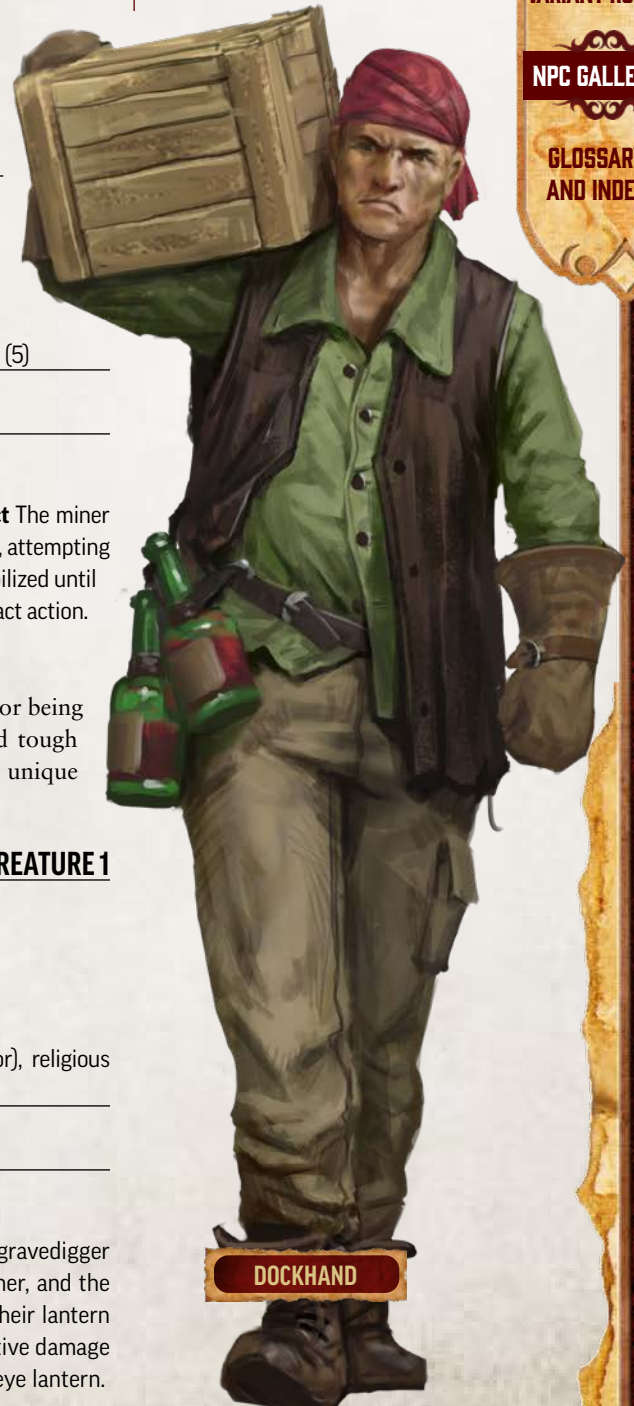
Melee ♦ shovel +9, **Damage** 1d4+4 bludgeoning

Light in the Dark ♦♦ (concentrate, divine, manipulate) **Requirements** The gravedigger holds a bull's-eye lantern in one hand and their religious symbol in the other, and the lantern contains oil; **Effect** The gravedigger recites a brief chant to ignite their lantern with positive energy. Each undead creature in a 15-foot line takes 3d6 positive damage (DC 14 basic Fortitude save). This action uses all remaining oil in the bull's-eye lantern.



FORCED LABOR

Many creatures and societies still practice forced labor, whether through full enslavement or indebted labor to pay a society for their crimes. The dockhand, farmer, miner, and servant could also be forced laborers. Forced laborers could become allies or at least informants to PCs who free them.



DOCKHAND

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DELAYING TACTICS

A magistrate can weaponize the bureaucracy. A judge might enforce an archaic law generally ignored yet still on the books. A tax collector could ask for the seal of a lord who is out of the region. The harbormaster could require all fees in local coin, fully aware money changers won't be open for days.

MAGISTRATES

Magistrates are the cogs and gears that keep bureaucracy running, moving the machine along under the inertia of the status quo.

JUDGE

These magistrates have the final say on the intent and spirit of the law. Properly exercised, the duty of a judge is the strict adherence to the law regardless of station, with minimal sentimentality toward rationalization and justification of why the law was broken. Yet expectations and practice are not always the same thing. For every unbiased justice, there is one who is zealously confident in their own agenda. In a court case or other legal proceeding, the judge is a 6th-level challenge.

JUDGE

CREATURE -1

LN **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**
Perception +8 (+15 to Sense Motive)

Languages Common

Skills Deception +8, Diplomacy +12, Intimidation +12, Legal Lore +16, Society +14

Str +0, **Dex** -1, **Con** +1, **Int** +4, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

Items books (law and rhetoric; worth 3 gp), gavel, judge's robes

Group Impression When the judge Makes an Impression, they can compare their Diplomacy check result to the Will DCs of up to four targets instead of one.

AC 13; **Fort** +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +14

HP 9

Speed 25 feet

Melee ✦ gavel +4, **Damage** 1d4 bludgeoning

Melee ✦ fist +4 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4 bludgeoning

Ranged ✦ gavel +3 (thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d4 bludgeoning

TAX COLLECTOR

Ledgers and marks, positive and negative flows, and levies and allotments are a tax collector's daily bread. Where coin is gained, from whom it is collected, and to whom is it disbursed are their main concerns; the collector is unconcerned with whether the taxed can afford it or take a loan to make up for any shortfall. However, tax collectors aren't immune to corruption: arrangements can be made, deals discussed, documents altered, or coin misappropriated. When dealing with matters of taxes and finance, the tax collector is a 3rd-level challenge.

TAX COLLECTOR

CREATURE -1

LN **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**
Perception +6 (DC 19 against Stealing)

Languages Common

Skills Deception +8, Diplomacy +8, Intimidation +8, Legal Lore +11, Mercantile Lore +13, Society +11, Thievery +6

Str +0, **Dex** +1, **Con** +0, **Int** +4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3

Items crossbow (10 bolts), dagger, collection of expired documents with intact seals, merchant's scale, padded armor, tax documents in scroll case

AC 14; **Fort** +2, **Ref** +3, **Will** +9

HP 8

Speed 25 feet

Melee ✦ dagger +5 (agile, versatile S) **Damage** 1d4 piercing

Ranged ✦ crossbow +5 (range increment 120 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d8 piercing

Glittering Distraction ✦ (emotion, mental) The tax collector Strides. At any point during this movement, they can Interact to hurl coins. If there are commoners about, this typically causes a scene. Crowds are usually difficult terrain and have other effects (Core Rulebook 514).

TAX COLLECTOR

HARBORMASTER

There are three flows important to any port: the seaward and coastal flows, marked by the rise and fall of the tides, and the flow of trade. A harbormaster is expected to know the former two reflexively and encourage the latter while knowing jurisdictional rules of law. Often old hands of the sea, harbormasters find themselves anchored to a port by commitment, conflict, or reputation.

HARBORMASTER

CREATURE 3

LN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +6

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +9, Athletics +9, Diplomacy +5, Fishing Lore +8, Intimidation +5, Sailing Lore +10

Str +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** +2, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

Items fishing tackle, hatchet (2), ledger, manacles, spyglass

Steady Balance Whenever the harbormaster rolls a success on a check to Balance, they get a critical success instead. They're not flat-footed while Balancing on narrow surfaces and uneven ground. They can attempt an Acrobatics check instead of a Reflex save to Grab an Edge.

AC 17; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +9, **Will** +8

HP 46

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ hatchet +13 (agile, sweep), **Damage** 1d6+7 slashing

Ranged ♦ hatchet +11 (agile, sweep, thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d6+7 slashing

Experienced Hand The harbormaster has endured their share of adverse conditions at sea. Any creature that's in adverse weather or aboard a vessel on rough water is flat-footed to the harbormaster.

WARDEN

Wardens are the chief guardians of borders and frontiers. Whether they stand watch over a single village or an entire region, wardens keep a vigilant eye out for outside threats to their charges. Wardens are stalwart folk, often called to duty by Erastil to protect those around them. Be it times of war or upon the frontier, wardens are often the balanced edge of a blade between a community and the wilds at its fringes.

WARDEN

CREATURE 6

LN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +12

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +14, Nature +10, Stealth +12, Survival +12

Str +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +3, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1

Items bastard sword, backpack, bedroll, compass, +1 *composite longbow* (10 arrows), flint and steel, maps, pup tent, scale mail

AC 25; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +12, **Will** +12

HP 96

Warding Strike ⤵ **Trigger** One of the warden's enemies within 100 feet attacks one of the warden's allies or a person the warden is sworn to protect; **Effect** The warden Strikes the triggering enemy. If the Strike hits, the enemy's attack is deflected, reducing its damage by 8, or by 16 if the warden's Strike was a critical hit.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ bastard sword +16 (two-hand d12), **Damage** 1d8+7 slashing

Ranged ♦ *composite longbow* +17 (deadly 1d10, magical, propulsive, range increment 100 feet, reload 0, volley 30 feet), **Damage** 1d8+5 piercing

Warden's Protection A warden deals an extra 1d8 damage to any creature trespassing on the territory the warden protects.



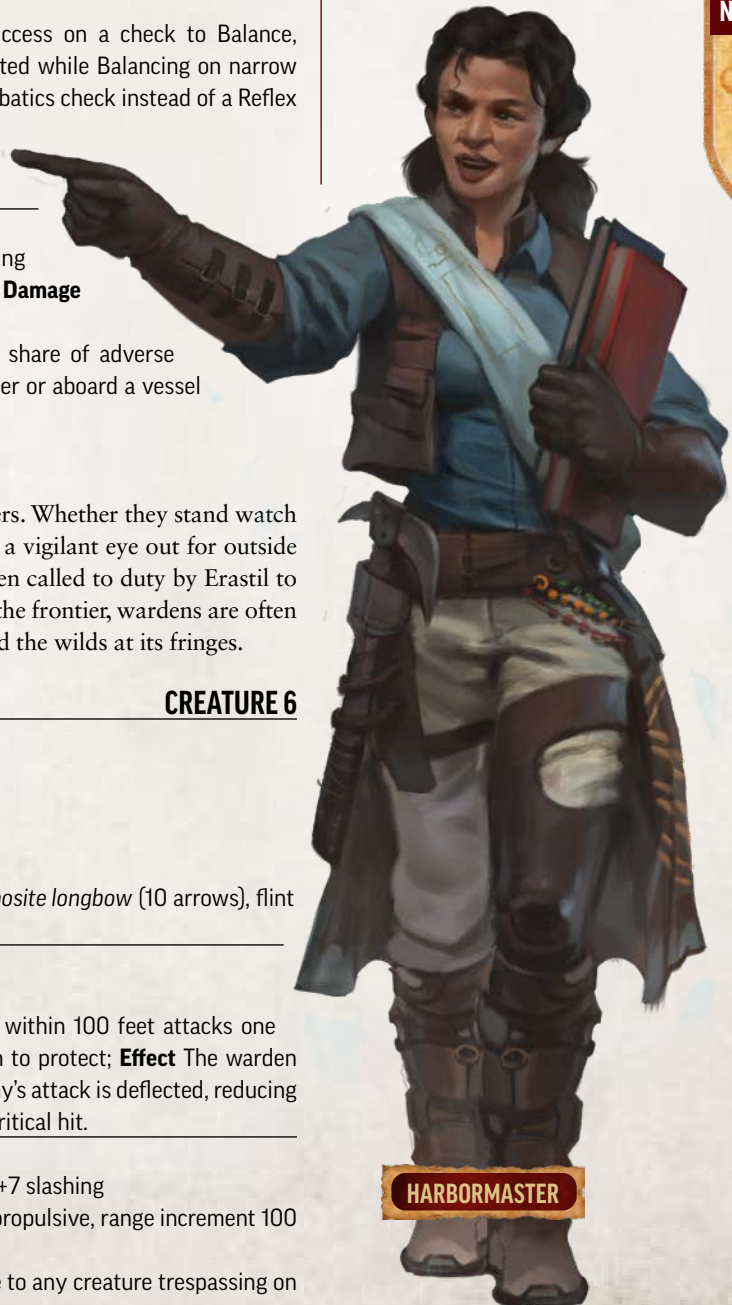
AT YOUR SERVICE

Magistrates can conscript others into service in a variety of positions.

Harbormaster: Bosun (page 243), dockhand (page 222), guard (page 232), ship captain (page 243).

Judge: Captain of the guard (page 234), executioner (page 235), guard (page 232), jailer (page 233)

Tax Collector: Captain of the guard (page 234), guard (page 232), jailer (page 233), watch officer (page 234)



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BRIBING MERCENARIES

Unless a mercenary prides himself on their name or reputation, the PCs might be able to bribe them to switch sides, or at least stand aside. You can estimate a bribe by taking roughly 5% of the Party Currency value from the row corresponding to the NPC's level on Table 10-9 on page 509 of the *Core Rulebook*.

MERCENARIES

A broad category that includes those wielding arms, spells, or even guile and cunning, mercenaries hire themselves and their expertise to those with the gold to pay for it.

BODYGUARD

Hired to protect someone famous or powerful, bodyguards use intimidation, quick wits, and martial skill to keep their charges safe. Such mercenaries might be auxiliaries to a noble's own guards, but with special directives to safeguard their patrons.

BODYGUARD

CREATURE 1

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +8

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +7, Intimidation +6, Society +2

Str +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +3, **Int** -1, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

Items greatclub, sap, studded leather

AC 16; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4

HP 25

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ greatclub +7 (backswing, shove), **Damage** 1d10+4 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ sap +7 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d6+4 bludgeoning

Bodyguard's Defense ♦♦ The bodyguard selects one creature they can see and hear within 30 feet. That creature gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC as long as the bodyguard is adjacent to the chosen creature and can act; this bonus lasts until the start of the bodyguard's next turn.

MAGE FOR HIRE

Not all mercenaries sell brawn and intimidating glares. Some sell their magical talents to earn a living. While there are many types of mages for hire, some of the sneakiest are specialized in divination, using their skills for infiltration and sabotage.

MAGE FOR HIRE

CREATURE 3

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +7

Languages Common

Skills Arcana +11, Society +9, Stealth +7, Thievery +9

Str +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +1

Items *invisibility potion*, spellbook, staff, thieves' tools

AC 17; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +9, **Will** +10

HP 31

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ staff +7 (two-hand d8), **Damage** 1d4 bludgeoning

Arcane Prepared Spells DC 20, attack +12; **2nd** *flaming sphere*, *knock*, see *invisibility*; **1st** *grease*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *true strike*; **Cantrips** (2nd) *dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *electric arc*, *mage hand*, *message*, *shield*

Wizard School Spell 1 Focus Point, DC 20; **2nd** *diviner's sight* (*Core Rulebook* 406)

BOUNTY HUNTER

Bounty hunters are constantly on the move, whether within city walls or the wilderness, trailing their fugitive quarries for capture... or disposal. Often relying on stealth or deception as much as martial skill, bounty hunters employ a vast array of talents to accomplish their goals, not to mention to collect the hefty payout that follows.

MAGE FOR HIRE

BOUNTY HUNTER

CREATURE 4

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +14

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +9, Deception +10, Diplomacy +8, Intimidation +8, Stealth +12, Survival +10

Str +3 Dex +4, Con +1, Int +0, Wis +4, Cha +1

Items crossbow (10 bolts), falchion, simple manacles, studded leather

AC 21; Fort +9, Ref +12, Will +12

HP 60

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ falchion +13 (forceful, sweep), Damage 1d10+6 slashing

Ranged ♦ crossbow +14 (range increment 120 feet, reload 1), Damage 1d10+5 piercing

Hunt Prey ♦ (concentrate) The bounty hunter designates a single creature they can see and hear, or one they're Tracking, as their prey. The bounty hunter gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Perception checks to Seek the prey and to Survival checks to Track the prey. This effect lasts until the bounty hunter uses Hunt Prey again.

Running Reload ♦ The bounty hunter Stride, Steps, or Sneaks, and then Interacts to reload.

Precision Edge The first time the bounty hunter hits their hunted prey in a round, they deal an additional 1d8 precision damage.

MONSTER HUNTER

Some mercenaries eschew the complications of politics, oaths of service, and fealty and just get paid to hunt monsters. It's a straightforward form of mercenary service, often dangerous in the extreme, but one that can yield glory and fame.

MONSTER HUNTER

CREATURE 6

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +13

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +15, Monster Lore +13, Stealth +13, Survival +11

Str +4, Dex +3, Con +3, Int +1, Wis +1, Cha +1

Items composite longbow (20 arrows), +1 greataxe, hide armor

AC 23; Fort +15, Ref +11, Will +13

HP 108

Attack of Opportunity ↻

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ greataxe +15 (magical, sweep), Damage 1d12+8 slashing

Ranged ♦ composite longbow +14 (deadly d10, propulsive, range increment 100 feet, reload 0, volley 30 feet), Damage 1d8+6 piercing

Rage ♦ (concentrate, emotion, mental) **Requirements** The monster hunter isn't fatigued or raging; **Effect** The monster hunter gains 9 temporary Hit Points that last until the rage ends. While raging, they deal 8 additional damage with melee attacks, gain a +10-foot status bonus to their Speed, and take a -1 penalty to AC. The monster hunter can't use concentrate actions except Seek and rage actions. The rage lasts for 1 minute, until there are no enemies the monster hunter can perceive, or until the monster hunter falls unconscious. Once the rage ends, the monster hunter can't Rage again for 1 minute.

Sudden Charge ♦♦ The monster hunter Strides twice and makes a melee Strike.



MERCENARY BANTER

Here's some parlance commonly used by mercenaries.

Crackster: Someone adept at breaking locks or safes.

Diving: Theft or smuggling below ground, often through tunnels.

Foxing: To play at being asleep, usually for an ambush.

Medic: A healer.

Ram: A hard-hitting warrior.

Slinger: A spellcaster.

Sway of Coin: Swearing allegiance to whoever pays the most.

Waterline: A mercenary troupe's money: "Take time in town while the waterline's high, everyone."

Whisperstep: Anyone who can move stealthily.

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MYSTIC CADRES

Golarion has several mystic groups.

The Church of Razmir offers a plan of 31 steps to divinity. **The Esoteric**

Order of the Palatine Eye seeks celestial truths said to be granted by an ancient angel. **Knights of the Aeon Star** search for secret lore.

Followers of **Rivethun**, dwarven animism, reach out to spirits to gain knowledge and earn favors.

MYSTICS

Those initiated into the hidden truths and forbidden secrets of the world are forever transformed—or so they claim. To the cynical, a mystic is nothing more than a charlatan or zealot. Others profess to sense an aura around such luminaries and treat them with reverence, lest they offend some harbinger of unspeakable doom.

ADEPT

Adepts have unlocked only the most minor occult mysteries of the universe. A few are chosen by accomplished practitioners for further training. Others volunteer to join a cabal by passing an initiation ritual.

ADEPT

CREATURE -1

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +4

Languages Common

Skills Arcana +5, Diplomacy +3, Occultism +7, Scribing Lore +5, Society +5

Str +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +0, **Int** +3, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1

Items journal, robes, scroll case, writing set

Focused Thinker ◆ (concentrate) The adept focuses inward to muster knowledge and wisdom. While in this state of concentration, they gain a +2 status bonus to checks to Recall Knowledge, but take a -2 penalty to Perception. They can end their focused state with a single action, which has the concentrate trait.

AC 14; **Fort** +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** +6

HP 8

Speed 25 feet

Melee ◆ fist +6 (agile, nonlethal); **Damage** 1d4 bludgeoning

Ranged ◆ journal +6 (nonlethal, thrown 10 feet); **Damage** 1d6 bludgeoning

Occult Spells Known DC 14; **Cantrips (1st)** *daze, detect magic, mage hand*

HARROW READER

A harrow deck is a set of 54 cards with symbolic illustrations that serves as a sacred divining tool. Feared by the superstitious and avoided by those who know better than to tempt fate, harrow readers live and work in traveling communities, often moving from town to town as opportunities arise. For encounters involving social interaction, the harrow reader is a 3rd-level challenge.

HARROW READER

CREATURE -1

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +7

Languages Common

Skills Diplomacy +8, Fortune-Telling Lore +11, Occultism +7, Performance +10 (+11 when fortune-telling), Society +7

Str +1, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +2, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +3

Items harrow deck, sickle

AC 13; **Fort** +3, **Ref** +6, **Will** +10

HP 9

Speed 25 feet

Melee ◆ sickle +7 (agile, finesse, trip); **Damage** 1d4+1 slashing

Fated Doom While harrow readers try to avoid combat, no throw of the cards can avoid fate, so a harrow reader learns how to best survive. In the harrow reader's first encounter each day, they gain a +1 status bonus to their initiative roll, their attack rolls, and their AC.

CULTIST

Excessively zealous, a cultist finds exalted purpose in their sect. Never questioning their leader, they devote themselves to achieving their most perfect spiritual form.



ADEPT

CULTIST

CREATURE 1

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +4

Languages Common

Skills Deception +3, Intimidation +3, Cult Lore (applies to the cultist's own cult) +8, Occultism +3, Society +4, Stealth +6

Str +4, **Dex** +3, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** -1, **Cha** +0

Items dagger, cultist garb (functions as leather armor)

AC 17; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +8, **Will** +4 (or +2 vs. higher-ranking members of the cult)

HP 20

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +7 (agile, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+4 piercing

Ranged ♦ dagger +6 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+4 piercing

Fanatical Frenzy ♦ **Requirements** The cultist has taken damage and is neither fatigued nor already in a frenzy; **Effect** The cultist flies into a frenzy that lasts 1 minute. While frenzied, the cultist gains a +1 status bonus to attack rolls and a +2 status bonus to damage rolls, and they take a -2 status penalty to AC. The cultist can't voluntarily stop their frenzy. After their frenzy, the cultist is fatigued.

FALSE PRIEST

Belief is perhaps the strongest force in the universe, driving many to great heights. Instilling a sense of belief and then using that belief against someone, however, is the discipline of a false priest. Combining their gifts of deception, a silver tongue, and an impeccable sense of timing, the false priest can gain influence among the powerful, entice a mark to dispose of all their possessions, and make a believer out of a cynic.

FALSE PRIEST

CREATURE 4

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +10

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +10, Athletics +8, Deception +12, Performance +12, Religion +8, Society +6

Str +0, **Dex** +4, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

Items alchemical tools (used as "blessed items" to fool marks), backpack, cloak, hand crossbow (20 bolts), collection of fake relics, wooden religious symbol, studded leather armor, rapier

AC 21; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +12, **Will** +10

HP 51

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ rapier +12 (deadly 1d8, disarm, finesse), **Damage** 1d6+8 piercing

Ranged ♦ hand crossbow +12 (range increment 60 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d6+4 piercing

Deceiver's Surprise On the first round of combat, if the false priest rolls Deception or Performance for initiative, creatures that haven't acted yet are flat-footed to the false priest.

Fickle Prophecy ♦ (emotion, mental) The false priest convinces someone of their omnipotence by attempting a Deception check compared to the creature's Will DC. If successful, the target gains 1d8+4 temporary Hit Points that last for 1 hour or until the false priest removes them by rebuking the target, whichever occurs first.

Sneak Attack The false priest deals an extra 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures. This increases to 2d6 against creatures flat-footed due to the false priest's Feint or deceiver's surprise.

The Jig Is Up ↻ **Frequency** once per hour; **Trigger** The false priest critically fails a Deception or Performance check; **Effect** The false priest Strides.



MYSTIC RITUALS

The following are rituals sometimes cast by mystic groups. Those from the *Bestiary* are available only to appropriate celestials and fiends within the organizations.

- *Abyssal pact* (*Bestiary* 347)
- *angelic messenger* (*Bestiary* 348)
- *call spirit* (*Core Rulebook* 410)
- *commune* (*Core Rulebook* 410)
- *Infernal pact* (*Bestiary* 348)
- *legend lore* (*Core Rulebook* 413)
- *planar ally* (*Core Rulebook* 413)
- *planar binding* (*Core Rulebook* 414)



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FORMS OF FORTUNE-TELLING

- Anthomancy:** Flowers.
- Astrology:** The cosmic caravan.
- Demonomancy:** Asking demons.
- Harrowing:** Harrow card readings.
- Haruspicy:** Entrails.
- Ichthyomancy:** The next fish caught.
- Mazomancy:** A nursing babe.
- Oneiromancy:** Dreams.
- Tyromancy:** Coagulation of cheese.

NECROMANCER

Defiling the natural order and spitting in the face of convention, the necromancer remains dutifully committed to understanding what forces await beyond the mortal boundaries of life and death.

NECROMANCER

CREATURE 5

NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +10

Languages Common

Skills Arcana +13, Crafting +11, Intimidation +8, Religion +10

Str +2, Dex +3, Con +2, Int +4, Wis +3, Cha -1

Items light mace, hooded robe, scroll of spectral hand, spellbook (*Abominable Missives of the Atrophied*)

Stench of Decay (arcane, aura, conjuration, poison) The necromancer emits a scent of putrid rot in a 5-foot emanation. A creature that enters or begins its turn in the aura is sickened 1.

AC 20; Fort +9, Ref +12, Will +12

HP 58

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ light mace +12 (agile, finesse, shove), **Damage** 1d4+4 bludgeoning

Wizard Prepared Spells DC 21, attack +13; **3rd** *bind undead*, *lightning bolt*, *vampiric touch*; **2nd** *false life*, *grim tendrils*, *mirror image*, *web*; **1st** *fear*, *feather fall*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *spider sting*; **Cantrips (3rd)** *chill touch*, *detect magic*, *electric arc*, *ray of frost*, *read aura*, *shield*

Wizard School Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 21; **3rd** *call of the grave* (*Core Rulebook* 406)

Drain Bonded Item ♦ (arcane) **Frequency** once per day; **Requirements** The necromancer hasn't acted yet on this turn; **Effect** The necromancer expends the power stored in their mace. This gives them the ability to cast one prepared spell they prepared today and already cast, without spending a spell slot.

CULT LEADER

A career of mystical accomplishments combined with a lifetime of subterfuge and intimidation has elevated this occultist to a powerful position.

CULT LEADER

CREATURE 7

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +14

Languages Common

Skills Arcana +13, Deception +16, Diplomacy +14, Intimidation +16, Cult Lore (applies to the leader's own cult) +19, Occultism +17, Society +13

Str +0, Dex +4, Con +1, Int +4, Wis +3, Cha +5

Items indecipherable book of sigils, ceremonial robes, +1 staff

AC 23; Fort +12, Ref +15, Will +18

HP 95

Protect the Master! ↻ (auditory, concentrate, emotion, linguistic, mental, move) **Trigger** The cult leader is targeted with an attack, and a lower-ranking cultist is adjacent to them; **Effect** The cult leader orders their cultist to leap in front of the attack. The cultist and cult leader swap places, and the cultist becomes the target of the attack. If the cultist has *Fanatical Frenzy* or a similar ability, they can activate it as a reaction if they take damage from the triggering attack.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ staff +13 (magical, two-hand d8), **Damage** 1d4+6 bludgeoning

Occult Spontaneous Spells DC 26, attack +18; **4th** (3 slots) *dimension*

CULT LEADER

door, glibness, outcast's curse, suggestion; **3rd** (4 slots) enthrall, grim tendrils, haste, mind reading; **2nd** (4 slots) augury, calm emotions, hideous laughter, touch of idiocy; **1st** (4 slots) bless, illusory disguise, lock, unseen servant; **Cantrips (4th)** chill touch, daze, detect magic, guidance, shield

Gather Converts **◆◆◆** (auditory, concentrate, emotion, linguistic, mental) With a short emotional phrase, the cult leader tries to sway the public to do their bidding. The cult leader tries to convince up to four bystanders in a crowd to either cause a commotion, turn against a person or group, leave the area, protect the cult leader, or calm down. The cult leader attempts a single Deception check against the highest Perception DC among the targets.

Critical Success The targets believe the lie and act as directed for 1 minute. Additionally, one bystander remains by the cult leader's side, influenced enough to join their sect. All other targets become wise to the cult leader after 1 minute, at which point their attitude toward the leader worsens by one step.

Success As a critical success, but no bystander joins the sect permanently.

Critical Failure The crowd is unmoved and unamused, and their attitude toward the cult leader worsens by one step.

DEMONOLOGIST

Demonologists can pull a creature from the Abyss and bend it to their will... for a time.

DEMONOLOGIST

CREATURE 7

CE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +15

Languages Abyssal, Common

Skills Academia Lore +14, Arcana +16, Demon Lore +18, Diplomacy +11 (+13 with demons), Religion +15

Str +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** +4, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +0

Items +1 longspear, scholarly robes, spell component pouch, spellbook (*Fiendish Hypotheses and Protections from Same*)

Abyssal Temptation (divine, enchantment, mental) Demonic study has garnered the attention of at least one demon that is actively trying to possess the demonologist. When the demonologist publicly espouses the benefits of demonic power (whether they believe it a good thing or not), they gain a +1 status bonus to skill checks, AC, and saves for 1 day. These bonuses don't apply against demons. At the end of the day, the demonologist must attempt a DC 20 Will save, becoming possessed for 1 day on a failure (permanently on a critical failure).

AC 22; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +12, **Will** +15

HP 100

Speed 25 feet

Melee **◆** *longspear* +17 (magical, reach), **Damage** 1d8+9 piercing

Arcane Prepared Spells DC 26, attack +18; **4th** *clairvoyance*, *lightning bolt*, *resilient sphere*; **3rd** *fireball*, *glyph of warding*, *slow*, *stinking cloud*; **2nd** *acid arrow*, *blur*, *hideous laughter*, *see invisibility*; **1st** *fear* (×2), *fleet step*, *mending*; **Cantrips (4th)** *acid splash*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *light*, *read aura*

Breach the Abyss **◆** **Requirements** The demonologist's last action was to cast a non-cantrip spell; **Effect** The demonologist siphons energy drawn from the Abyss into their weapon. Until the end of the turn, the weapon deals an extra 2d6 damage. Roll 1d20 to determine the type: 1–7 acid, 8–9 cold, 10–11 electricity, 12–18 fire, 19–20 negative.

Demon Summoning The demonologist can cast a 5th-level *summon fiend* arcane spell to summon a demon. To do so, they must sacrifice two 4th-level prepared spells and voluntarily take 4d12 mental damage that can't be reduced or prevented. If the demonologist is unable to Sustain the Spell, including if they're knocked out or killed, the spell continues, but the GM rolls a DC 10 flat check each round, ending the spell on a failure.



DARK RITUALS

Most rituals have a simple gp cost and skills. But what if a desperate NPC is willing to offer something darker, such as lives, souls, or worse? Such a nefarious ritual uses a normal ritual as a baseline, but the DCs and proficiency requirements might be reduced or waived entirely, as might any gp cost.



DEMONOLOGIST

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DEPLOYING THE WATCH

If no guard is present, it takes at least 1-2 rounds for a civilian to find a guard to sound an alarm whistle. If a guard was on the scene, they sound the alarm immediately. Reinforcements typically arrive 2-3 rounds later.

OFFICERS

Larger societies rely on those with the authority and the ability to interpret and enforce laws. In good-aligned societies, these officials carry out their duties fairly. In neutral and evil ones, these officials can be harsh and cruel (with an altered alignment to reflect this), imposing severe punishments on those who can't pay for mercy.

BARRISTER

Barristers may serve as criminal prosecutors or as legal advocates, defending the rights of those accused of crimes or named as defendants in civil cases. In a court case or other legal proceeding, the barrister is a 4th-level challenge.

BARRISTER

CREATURE -1

LN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +6

Languages Common

Skills Deception +10, Diplomacy +12, Legal Lore +13, Performance +10, Society +9

Str +0, **Dex** +1, **Con** +1, **Int** +3, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

Items court garb (functions as fine clothing), law book (functions as scholarly journal), writing set

Sway the Judge and Jury A barrister gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy checks to Make an Impression or Request something of the deciding members within a courtroom. If the barrister successfully Performs against a DC of 20 during the 20 minutes prior to the check, they increase the circumstance bonus to +4.

AC 13; **Fort** +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +12

HP 8

Speed 25 feet

Melee ✦ fist +4 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4 bludgeoning

Cite Precedent ✦ (auditory, linguistic) The barrister uses existing case law to undermine their opposition. If they succeed at a DC 20 Legal Lore check, they impose a -2 circumstance penalty on the next Diplomacy check an opponent attempts in a legal argument. Any further attempts to Cite Precedent fail until a new topic with different precedents is being argued.

GUARD

Guards are rank-and-file members of a town watch or city guard, trained to look for trouble, take down criminals, and follow orders. They are a match for only the most fledgling of adventurers and criminals, but, given time, the settlement can usually muster them in numbers sufficient to neutralize most threats.

GUARD

CREATURE 1

LN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +7 (+8 to find concealed objects)

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +7, Intimidation +5, Legal Lore +3

Str +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** -1

Items crossbow (10 bolts), club, dagger, sap, scale mail, signal whistle

AC 18; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5

HP 20

Attack of Opportunity ⤵

Speed 25 feet

Melee ✦ club +9, **Damage** 1d6+4 bludgeoning

Melee ✦ sap +9 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d6+4 bludgeoning

Ranged ✦ crossbow +7 (range increment 120 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d8 piercing

Ranged ✦ club +7 (thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d6+4 bludgeoning

BARRISTER

ARCHER SENTRY

Archer sentries slightly outrank the rank-and-file guards, taking positions on walls, garrisons, and other important locations where they can stay out of the fray and pick off criminals or assailants.

ARCHER SENTRY

CREATURE 2

LN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +11

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +8, Athletics +6, Intimidation +4, Legal Lore +4

Str +2, **Dex** +4, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +0

Items composite longbow (100 arrows), shortsword, leather armor, signal whistle

AC 19; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +10, **Will** +7

HP 30

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ shortsword +10 (agile, finesse, versatile P), **Damage** 1d6+3 slashing

Ranged ♦ composite longbow +10 (deadly 1d10, range increment 100 feet, reload 0, volley 30 feet), **Damage** 1d8+2 piercing

Sentry's Aim ♦♦ (concentrate) The archer sentry aims carefully and fires. They make a ranged weapon Strike with a +1 circumstance bonus. The Strike ignores the concealed condition, lesser cover, and standard cover, and reduces greater cover to standard cover.

JAILER

A jailer's primary responsibility is to keep prisoners from escaping. Jailers must often use force, or the threat of force, to keep their charges in line, as even the most carefully crafted cells, manacles, or chains can fail with time and persistence when the prisoners have the will to attempt an escape.

JAILER

CREATURE 3

LN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +9 (+10 to find concealed objects)

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +11, Diplomacy +5, Intimidation +7

Str +4, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

Items club, crossbow (20 bolts), keyring, simple manacles, signal whistle, studded leather armor

AC 20; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +10, **Will** +7

HP 45

Attack of Opportunity ↻

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ club +11, **Damage** 1d6+8 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ crossbow +10 (range increment 120 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d8+4 piercing

Melee ♦ club +10 (thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d6+6 bludgeoning

Efficient Capture ♦♦♦ (attack, manipulate) **Requirements** The jailer has manacles in hand and is adjacent to a creature; **Effect** The jailer attempts to bind the creature's wrists or ankles with the manacles. If the jailer succeeds at an attack roll with a +9 modifier against the target's AC, they apply the manacles.

Intimidating Strike ♦♦ (emotion, fear, fighter, mental) The jailer makes a melee Strike. If it hits and deals damage, the target is frightened 1, or frightened 2 on a critical hit.

Subdue Prisoners The jailer doesn't take the normal penalty for making a nonlethal attack when attacking with their club.



RAISE THE ALARM!

In a settlement with an alarm, brawls or other major disruptions trigger an alarm 1 round after the watch is alerted. Guards start to arrive after about 5 rounds, usually in patrols of 2 or 3 members, with larger groups of 8–12 near important locations.



JAILER

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JAILBREAK!

If a PC or ally gets imprisoned, the group might plot a jailbreak. For a complex jail or penitentiary, this might require use of the infiltration subsystem (described on page 160). With a smaller town or city jail with a simple structure and small staff, it could require just a bit of force. The jailbreak might just be the beginning, leading to additional adventure!

WATCH OFFICER

Watch officers are assigned to a certain area within a city or community. Often leading a small team of lower-ranking guards, they patrol those areas to maintain order and enforce laws. Watch officers get the job done, though their methods are not always gentle or kind. Because the watch officer is responsible to their superiors for their area, they sometimes need to make tough decisions between justice and effectiveness.

WATCH OFFICER

CREATURE 3

LN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +8 (+9 to Sense Motive)

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +11, Diplomacy +6, Intimidation +9, Legal Lore +7, Society +5

Str +4, **Dex** +1, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +1

Items breastplate, crossbow (20 bolts), dagger, signal whistle, steel shield (Hardness 5, 20 HP, BT 10), warhammer

AC 20 (22 with shield raised); **Fort** +10, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8

HP 45

Air of Authority (aura, emotion, mental) 10 feet. Creatures in the aura who are the same or lower level than the watch officer take a -2 status penalty to their Will DC against the watch officer's attempts to Coerce or Demoralize them.

Bravery When the captain of the guard rolls a success on a Will save against a fear effect, they get a critical success instead. In addition, any time they gain the frightened condition, reduce its value by 1.

Attack of Opportunity ↻

Shield Block ↻

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ warhammer +13 (shove), **Damage** 1d8+7 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ crossbow +10 (range increment 120 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d8+3 piercing

Sudden Charge ♦♦ **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The watch officer Strides twice. If they end their movement within melee reach of at least one enemy, they can make a melee Strike against that enemy.

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD

The captain of the guard leads a troop of soldiers who serve as security forces for a powerful individual, most often a high-ranking noble or very rich merchant, though this stat block could also represent a lower-ranking captain of the guard for the leader of a nation. A formidable opponent in their own right, the captain of the guard skillfully employs their troops to protect the life and health of their ward.

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD

CREATURE 6

LN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +15

Languages Common

Skills Athletics+15, Diplomacy +11, Intimidation +13, Legal Lore +12, Society +10, Warfare Lore +8

Str +5, **Dex** +0, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +3

Items crossbow (20 bolts), dagger, full plate, +1 longsword, steel shield (Hardness 5, 20 HP, BT 10)

WATCH OFFICER

AC 24 (26 with shield raised); **Fort** +14, **Ref** +12, **Will** +15
HP 95

Aura of Command (aura, emotion, mental) 30 feet. The captain of the guard bolsters lower-level guards under their command, granting them a +1 status bonus to their attack rolls and a +2 status bonus to their Will saves.

Bravery As watch officer.

Shield Warden When the captain has their shield raised, they can Shield Block when an attack is made against an adjacent ally. If they do, the shield prevents that ally from taking damage instead of the captain.

Attack of Opportunity ↻

Shield Block ↻

Speed 20 feet

Melee ✦ *longsword* +18 (magical, versatile P), **Damage** 1d8+11 slashing

Ranged ✦ *crossbow* +12 (range increment 120 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d8+6 piercing

Shielded Advance ✦ **Requirements** The captain of the guard has their shield raised; **Effect** The captain of the guard presses forward, using their shield to push back foes. The captain Strides and Shoves, in either order. The multiple attack penalty doesn't apply to this Shove, though the Shove does count toward the captain's multiple attack penalty.

EXECUTIONER

Executioners carry out sentences from cruel tyrants and legitimate rulers alike. Most remain numb to the necessity of their duty, but some evil executioners grow to love the power of having someone else's life in their hands.

EXECUTIONER

CREATURE 6

LN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +12

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +15, Intimidation +13, Medicine +10

Str +5, **Dex** +2, **Con** +3, **Int** -1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +2

Items +1 *greataxe*, hood, leather armor

AC 23; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +12, **Will** +14

HP 105

Speed 25 feet

Melee ✦ *greataxe* +16 (magical, sweep), **Damage** 1d12+9 slashing

Behead ✦✦✦ **Requirements** The executioner is adjacent to a dying creature or a creature specifically prepared for a killing blow; **Effect** The executioner Strikes the creature with their greataxe. On a hit, in addition to taking damage, the target must attempt a Fortitude save or be reduced to 0 HP and become dying 1. If the creature was already dying (including if it was reduced to 0 HP by the Strike's damage), the creature's dying value increases by 1, in addition to any increase from the Strike. On a critical failure, the creature dies instantly. If the executioner's Strike was a critical hit, the target uses the outcome for one degree of success worse than the result of their saving throw.

Intimidating Strike ✦✦ (emotion, fear, fighter, mental) The executioner makes a melee Strike. If it hits and deals damage, the target is frightened 1, or frightened 2 on a critical hit.

Mark for Death ✦ (concentrate) The executioner marks a single creature they can see for death. The first time each round the executioner Strikes that creature, the Strike deals 1d12 additional precision damage. The creature remains marked for death until the executioner is knocked out, marks a different creature for death, or the encounter ends.



UNUSUAL MISDEMEANORS

- Altering the weather without a permit
- Consuming (or refusing to consume) intoxicating substances on celebration days
- Failing to clean up after animal companions
- Flying within city limits
- Selling potions without a license



CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD



PERFORMERS

Performances can serve as entertainment, expressions of beauty, or part of a shared culture.

DANCER

Dance can be used to tell stories, share emotions, provide entertainment, and display a performer's athletic ability. The dancer is a 5th-level challenge for dance contests.

DANCER

CREATURE 1

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +3

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +8, Athletics +8, Diplomacy +7, Performance +13 (+15 when dancing), Stealth +6, Theater Lore +5

Str +1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +4

Items dagger (3), jewelry and clothes (worth 10 gp)

AC 16; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +3

HP 20

Speed 25 feet

Melee ✦ dagger +8 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+3 piercing

Melee ✦ foot +8 (agile, finesse, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4+3 bludgeoning

Melee ✦ dagger +8 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+3 piercing

Fascinating Dance ✦ **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The dancer Strides up to their Speed. Once during this movement, when the dancer is adjacent to a creature, the dancer can make that creature attempt a DC 17 Will save. On a failure, that creature is fascinated with the dancer until the end of its next turn.

ACROBAT

Acrobats perform feats of agility, balance, and strength. The acrobat is a 5th-level challenge for contests of acrobatics and the like.

ACROBAT

CREATURE 2

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +6

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +15, Athletics +8, Circus Lore +5, Deception +5, Performance +9, Stealth +8

Str +2, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +1

Items climbing kit, dagger (5), rope (50 feet)

Steady Balance When the acrobat rolls a success on an Acrobatics check, they get a critical success instead. They aren't flat-footed when attempting to Balance and can attempt an Acrobatics check instead of a Reflex save to Grab an Edge.

AC 18; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +12, **Will** +4

HP 28

Cat Fall The acrobat treats all falls as 50 feet shorter.

Nimble Dodge ✨ **Trigger** The acrobat is targeted with a melee or ranged attack by an attacker they can see; **Effect** The acrobat gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against the triggering attack.

Speed 30 feet

Melee ✦ dagger +10 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+4 piercing

Melee ✦ foot +10 (agile, finesse, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4+4 bludgeoning

Ranged ✦ dagger +11 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+4 piercing

Sneak Attack The acrobat deals an extra 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

Swinging Strike ✨ The acrobat swings on a rope or trapeze, moving up to double their Speed. At any point during the swing, they can make a melee Strike.



ACROBAT

TROUBADOUR

Troubadours keep alive the traditional songs of their cultural and write original works to commemorate major events.

TROUBADOUR

CREATURE 3

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +8

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +8, Deception +9, Diplomacy +9, Performance +13 (+14 when playing the lute), Occultism +7, Society +7, Stealth +8, Theater Lore +9

Str +0, **Dex** +3, **Con** +0, **Int** +2, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +4

Items crossbow (10 bolts), leather armor, lute, poetry book, rapier

Bardic Lore The troubadour can Recall Knowledge on any subject with a +7 modifier.

AC 19; **Fort** +5, **Ref** +10, **Will** +8

HP 38

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ rapier +12 (deadly 1d8, disarm, finesse), **Damage** 1d6+3 piercing

Ranged ♦ crossbow +12 (range increment 120 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d8+3 piercing

Occult Spontaneous Spells DC 21; **2nd** (2 slots) *calm emotions*, *charm*, *magic mouth*; **1st** (3 slots) *charm*, *illusory disguise*, *soothe*, *ventriloquism*; **Cantrips (2nd)** *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read aura*

Bard Composition Spells 2 Focus Points, DC 21; **2nd** *counter performance* (Core Rulebook 386), *lingering composition* (Core Rulebook 387); **Cantrips (2nd)** *inspire courage* (Core Rulebook 386)

BEAST TAMER

Beast tamers bring the wild to civilization, rearing and training creatures to follow their commands and perform flashy tricks that entertain audiences.

BEAST TAMER

CREATURE 4

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +12

Languages Common, Druidic

Skills Athletics +8, Circus Lore +6, Diplomacy +8, Intimidation +8, Nature +12, Performance +8, Survival +10

Str +2, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

Items holly and mistletoe, leather armor, rope (50 feet), whip

Wild Empathy The beast tamer can use Diplomacy to Make an Impression on animals and to make very simple Requests of them.

AC 20; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +7, **Will** +12

HP 54

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ whip +11 (disarm, nonlethal, reach, trip), **Damage** 1d4+5 slashing

Primal Prepared Spells DC 22, attack +14; **2nd** *animal form*, *animal messenger*, *speak with animals*; **1st** *grease*, *jump*, *magic fang*; **Cantrips (2nd)** *dancing lights*, *guidance*, *produce flame*, *stabilize*, *tanglefoot*

Druid Order Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 22; **1st** *heal animal* (Core Rulebook 399)

Trained Animal The beast tamer fights alongside a trained animal ally of its level or lower, most likely a tiger (Bestiary 53). The animal has the standard number of actions, uses its normal stat block, and counts toward the encounter's XP budget normally.

The beast tamer can spend 1 action to gain the support benefit appropriate to its trained animal (Core Rulebook 215). Unlike for an animal companion, this doesn't require the animal to use any of its actions.



LET'S SEE A SHOW

Prices for a night's entertainment are per head and can be far higher for world-class performers. **Circus** 1 sp; **Dance** 2 cp social, 6 cp stage performance, 1 gp high-society ball; **Stage Play** 6 cp small theater, 1 sp major theater; **Opera** 5 gp general admission, 20 gp box seats; **Music** 5 cp troubadours, 2 sp orchestra; **Street Performance** tips of 1-2 cp.



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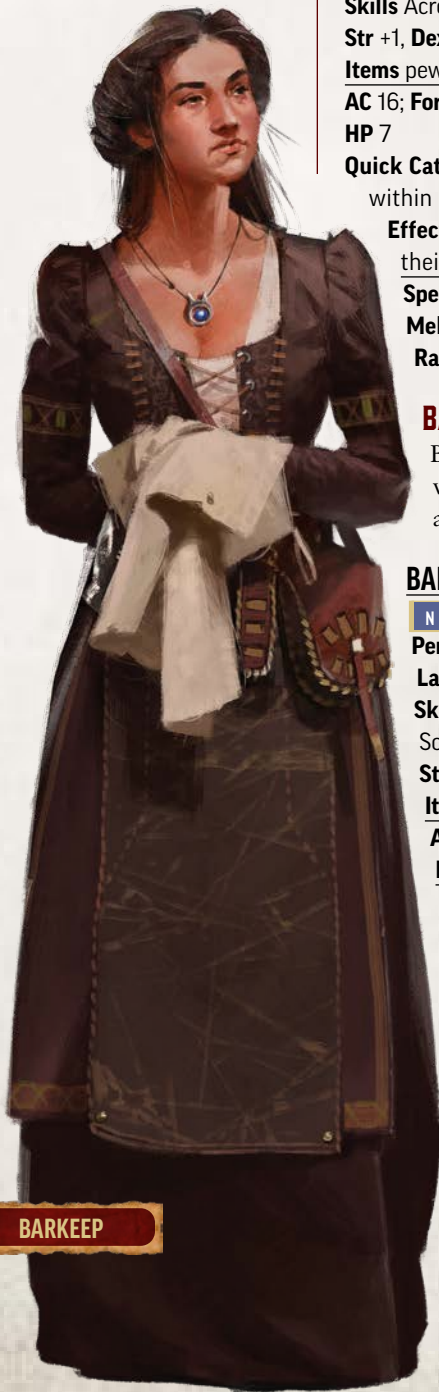
TAP LIST

Ale: Andoren beer, Boulderhead bock, Cheerful Delver stout, Liquid Ghosts, Luglurch ale, Thileu lager.

Cider and Mead: Hardroot cider, Qadiran cider, Two Knight Brewery mead, Wineberry mead.

Wine: Irrisen icewine, sarain, syrinelle, Whiterose Abbey wine

Spirits: Daggermark drip, dragon punch whiskey, Old Erebus, vjarik.



BARKEEP

PUBLICANS

Countless adventures begin in a tavern or a pub. Maybe it's because such places attract the risk-prone, or maybe it's because everyone needs a little liquid courage before they decide to take on a group of rampaging ogres.

SERVER

Always on the move from patron to patron, servers are the backbone of any tavern or eatery. Their work hones both their agility and their diplomacy.

SERVER

CREATURE -1

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +3

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +6, Diplomacy +4, Thievery +5

Str +1, **Dex** +4, **Con** +0, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +2

Items pewter mug, serving tray

AC 16; **Fort** +2, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

HP 7

Quick Catch **Trigger** An object that the server could hold in one hand is dropped within the server's reach; **Requirements** The server has at least one hand free;

Effect The server catches the dropped object before it hits the floor or leaves their reach.

Speed 25 feet

Melee **◆** fist +6 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4+1 bludgeoning

Ranged **◆** pewter mug +6 (thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d4+1 bludgeoning

BARKEEP

Barkeeps are often friends and mentors within a community, lending an ear while supplying libations. The best barkeeps have some talent for storytelling and passing on valuable advice.

BARKEEP

CREATURE 1

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +6

Languages Common

Skills Alcohol Lore +9, Athletics +6, Deception +6, Diplomacy +8, Performance +6, Society +5, Thievery +3

Str +3, **Dex** +0, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +3

Items barkeep's apron (functions as padded armor), flask of whiskey, pewter mug, sap

AC 14; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6

HP 25

Speed 25 feet

Melee **◆** sap +6 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d6+3 bludgeoning

Melee **◆** fist +6 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4+3 bludgeoning

Ranged **◆** pewter mug +3 (thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d4+3 bludgeoning

Bar Brawler The barkeep has been in enough bar fights to know how to throw a few punches. When fighting in their bar and making a nonlethal attack, the barkeep gains a +1 circumstance bonus to attack rolls and deals an additional 1d4 damage.

Barkeep's Advice **◆◆◆** (auditory, fortune, linguistic, mental) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The barkeep gives some pertinent advice to a single creature other than themselves. For 24 hours, when that creature fails a skill check or saving throw, they can recall this advice and reroll the check, using the second result instead. Once that creature uses this ability, its effect ends. A creature that receives the Barkeep's Advice is temporarily immune to the ability for 1 month.

INNKEEPER

The sight of an inn is a welcome one to any weary traveler. Innkeepers can often be found cleaning the common room, overseeing the evening meal, or settling in new lodgers. Innkeepers keep an eye on their neighbors' doings and are often excellent sources of information.

INNKEEPER

CREATURE 1

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +7

Languages Common

Skills Accounting Lore +5, Cooking Lore +5, Deception +6, Diplomacy +8, Society +7

Str +2, **Dex** +0, **Con** +1, **Int** +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3

Items broom (functions as staff), innkeeper's apron (functions as leather armor), ledger
Font of Gossip The innkeeper's business gives them insight into the neighborhood's happenings. When Gathering Information, a person can gain as much information chatting with the innkeeper for 30 minutes to an hour as they would gain from 2 hours spent canvassing the neighborhood. Each person can learn gossip from an innkeeper only once per day, and only if the innkeeper is friendly or helpful to that individual. Whatever information the innkeeper knows about a given topic doesn't change if someone else asks the innkeeper about that topic, unless the innkeeper has since learned more.

AC 14; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +9

HP 20

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ broom +7 (two-hand d8), **Damage** 1d4+2 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ fist +7 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4+2 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ ledger +5 (nonlethal, thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d4+2 bludgeoning

Home Turf An innkeeper gains a +2 circumstance bonus to attack rolls, damage rolls, and AC within their inn.

DRUNKARD

Every tavern has one—that person who drinks a little too much and starts a fight. While many drunkards are relatively harmless, a few have a hair trigger, and when they're set off come, no one—even the drunkard themselves—can tell you what started the row.

DRUNKARD

CREATURE 2

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +6

Languages Common

Skills Alcohol Lore +3, Athletics +7, Intimidation +8

Str +3, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** -1, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +2

Items drunkard's outfit (functions as padded armor), pewter mug

AC 17; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6

HP 40

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ fist +9 (agile, nonlethal); **Damage** 1d6+3 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ pewter mug +8 (thrown 10 feet); **Damage** 1d4+3 bludgeoning

Drunken Rage ♦ (concentrate, emotion, mental) **Requirements** The drunkard is drunk, and isn't fatigued or raging; **Effect** Something sets the drunkard off, causing them to fly into a drunken rage. They gain 6 temporary Hit Points that last until the drunken rage ends. While raging, they deal 4 additional damage with melee attacks and take a -1 penalty to AC. The drunkard can't use concentrate actions except Seek and rage actions. The rage lasts for 1 minute or until the drunkard falls unconscious or sobers up. The drunkard can't voluntarily stop the Drunken Rage. Once the rage ends, the drunkard can't Rage again for 1 minute.



BAR FIGHT!

Bar fights work better without a grid. Use the stat blocks here or in the Downtrodden section for notable participants, everyone else attacking nonlethally with fists or improvised weapons. Roll one or two attacks at the end of each round against each PC in the fight (+4 attack modifier, 1d4+2 bludgeoning damage). Alcohol rules can be found on page 120.



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UNCOMMON SCHOLASTIC DISCIPLINES

Beside the life and natural sciences such as arcana, biology, botany, geology, oceanography, and zoology, demand is increasing in cities for more modern disciplines, like anthropology, economics, sociology, urban planning, and even art curation and forensic investigation.

SCHOLARS

True power comes from knowledge: the power to shape the growth of kingdoms by mere whispers, staying three steps ahead of adversaries, or even knowing which flora is best for creating untraceable poisons.

LIBRARIAN

Keepers of knowledge, librarians document discoveries, events, and laws. The best librarians record events twice; once for public record, and again to record how events truly unfolded. A librarian typically knows four to six additional languages, often including Elven and Draconic. A librarian is a 3rd-level challenge for encounters involving research.

LIBRARIAN

CREATURE -1

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +7

Languages Common

Skills Academia Lore +11, Arcana +9, Library Lore +13, Nature +8, Religion +8

Str +0, Dex +1, Con +0, Int +4, Wis +3, Cha +1

Items dagger, writing set

Methodical Research (concentrate) When Searching through stacks of books, a librarian can find the answer to almost any question. This allows the librarian to use Library Lore in place of other lore skills, given enough time. The GM determines the DC of the check and the amount of time it takes (typically, a librarian can attempt three or four checks during 1 day of downtime).

AC 13; Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +7

HP 6

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ book +4 (nonlethal), Damage 1d4 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ fist +3 (agile, nonlethal), Damage 1d4 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ book +5 (nonlethal, thrown 10 feet), Damage 1d4 bludgeoning

TEACHER

The passing of knowledge and traditions from generation to generation is a time-honored occupation. Teachers exist to strengthen their populations with literacy, history, and advanced sciences, but most of all with inspiration. Most teachers provide general knowledge so their students are well rounded, but some are experts or even masters of a single discipline. A teacher typically knows three languages in addition to Common. For academic encounters, a teacher is a 4th-level challenge.

TEACHER

CREATURE -1

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +4

Languages Common

Skills Academia Lore +14, Diplomacy +7, Intimidation +5, one additional Lore +14

Str +0, Dex +0, Con -1, Int +4, Wis +2, Cha +3

Items cane (functions as staff), textbook, writing set

Font of Knowledge The teacher can attempt to Recall Knowledge on any general subject with a +10 modifier.

Inspirational Presence (aura, emotion, mental) 50 feet. Any of the teacher's students in the aura gains a +1 circumstance bonus to Recall Knowledge.

AC 12; Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +6

HP 5

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ cane +4 (two-hand d8), Damage 1d4 bludgeoning

TEACHER

ASTRONOMER

Different cultures have created stories of the hows and whys of the universe, if things exist beyond the stars, and if the gods manipulate the heavenly bodies. But astronomers aren't interested in folktales—they desire truth.

ASTRONOMER

CREATURE 2

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +10

Languages Common

Skills Arcana +8, Astronomy Lore +12, Occultism +8

Str +0, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** +4, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +0

Items astrolabe, spellbook, spell component pouch, staff

Living Sextant If the astronomer is able to see the night sky, they can Sense Direction using a +10 modifier.

AC 15; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +9

HP 23

Counterspell **Trigger** A creature Casts a Spell the astronomer has prepared; **Effect** The astronomer expends a prepared spell to counter the triggering creature's casting of that same spell. The astronomer loses its spell slot as if it had cast the triggering spell. The astronomer then attempts to counteract the triggering spell.

Speed 25 feet

Melee **◆** staff +6 (two-hand d8), **Damage** 1d4 bludgeoning

Arcane Prepared Spells DC 17, attack +9; **1st** (4 slots) *feather fall*, *floating disk*, *sleep*, *unseen servant*, **Cantrips (1st)** *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *read aura*, *sigil*, *telekinetic projectile*

SAGE

The greatest knowledge comes from experience. Village elders, ancient seers, and advisors to royalty are examples of individuals who are valued for their experiences. Sages serve their people as much as their sovereigns. They educate and try to prevent their people from straying from their cultures' acceptable norms and traditions. Sages rarely take power for themselves, as they take their responsibility seriously to guide wisely and empower those they serve.

SAGE

CREATURE 6

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +14

Languages Common

Skills Arcana +12, Diplomacy +13, Medicine +12, Nature +14, Occultism +12, Religion +12, Society +14

Str +2, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +4, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +0

Items religious symbol, +1 staff

AC 22; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +12, **Will** +16

HP 86

Timely Advice **◆** (auditory, concentrate, linguistic, mental) **Trigger** An ally is about to attempt an attack roll or skill check and has not yet rolled; **Effect** The sage gives the ally a savvy piece of advice, providing valuable insight. The ally gains a +2 circumstance bonus to the triggering roll.

Speed 25 feet

Melee **◆** staff +12 (magical, two-hand d8), **Damage** 1d4+5 bludgeoning

Sage's Analysis **◆** (concentrate) The sage studies a creature, attempting an Arcana, Nature, Occultism, Religion, or Society check against the creature's Recall Knowledge DC. On a success, the sage gains a +2 circumstance bonus to attack rolls and AC against that creature and deals an additional 2d6 damage to the creature with weapon attacks. These benefits last for 1 minute or until the sage uses this ability again.



CENTERS OF LEARNING

Kitharodian Academy (Taldor):

Famed bardic college teaching students of all social classes.

Magaambya (Nantambu): Ancient

school with some of the world's greatest stores of arcane knowledge.

University of Lepidstadt (Ustalav):

School primarily focusing on alchemy, medicine, and scientific study.



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SHIPBOARD SPELLS

The captain can gain all these spells in place of Dual Disarm. The bosun can exchange Pike and Strike to gain the cantrips and 1st-level spells.

Primal Prepared Spells DC 24 (DC 18 bosun), attack +16 (+10 bosun); **2nd** summon elemental, water breathing, water walk; **1st** feather fall, gust of wind (×2); **Cantrips (2nd, 1st for bosun)** electric arc, guidance, know direction, light, tanglefoot

SEAFARERS

Adventurers may need passage on a swift vessel, or they might face danger from raiders at sea or in coastal settlements.

NAVIGATOR

A navigator uses celestial bodies and shipping lanes to determine routes. For noncombat tasks involving navigation or sailing, the navigator is a 4th-level challenge.

NAVIGATOR

CREATURE 2

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +9

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +6, Nature +11, Sailing Lore +14, Society +8, Survival +9

Str +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +4, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +0

Items dagger, scroll case with ship's charts, writing set

Chart a Course (concentrate) By spending 10 minutes of work and succeeding at a DC 22 Sailing Lore check, the navigator plots an optimal course. The severity of environmental conditions other than temperature are reduced by one step for 24 hours (two steps on a critical success). This changes moderate damage to minor damage, winds that create greater difficult terrain cause only difficult terrain, and so on.

AC 18; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +8, **Will** +9

HP 28

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +8 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+4 piercing plus navigator's edge

Ranged ♦ dagger +8 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+4 piercing plus navigator's edge

Navigator's Edge The navigator deals an additional 1d6 weapon damage when on a ship.

PIRATE

These scourges of the seas are a threat to anyone who spends time away from land.

PIRATE

CREATURE 2

CN **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +6

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +8, Deception +6, Intimidation +6, Sailing Lore +8

Str +2, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +2

Items cutlass (functions as a scimitar), dagger, padded armor

AC 18; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6

HP 32

Attack of Opportunity ⤵

Bravery When the pirate rolls a success on a Will save against a fear effect, they get a critical success instead. In addition, anytime they gain the frightened condition, reduce its value by 1.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ cutlass +10 (forceful, sweep), **Damage** 1d6+5 slashing

Melee ♦ dagger +11 (agile, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+5 piercing

Ranged ♦ dagger +11 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+5 piercing

Boarding Action ♦♦ The pirate swings on a rope or Strides, moving up to double their Speed. If the pirate boarded or disembarked a boat during this movement, they can make a melee Strike at the end of their movement that deals one extra damage die on a hit.



NAVIGATOR

BOSUN

A ship's boatswain, or bosun, leads the deckhands who maintain the ship.

BOSUN

CREATURE 3

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +8

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +9, Athletics +9, Intimidation +9, Sailing Lore +11

Str +2, **Dex** +4, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +2

Items dagger, naval pike (functions as spear)

AC 19; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +11, **Will** +8

HP 45

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ fist +13 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d6+5 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ naval pike +11, **Damage** 1d6+5 piercing

Melee ♦ dagger +13 (agile, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+5 piercing

Ranged ♦ naval pike +13 (thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 1d6+5 piercing

Bosun's Command ♦ (auditory, concentrate, emotion, linguistic, mental) **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The bosun orders an ally to attack or to get in position. Until the end of the ally's next turn, they gain the bosun's choice of a +2 status bonus to attack rolls or a +10-foot status bonus to their Speeds.

Pike and Strike ♦♦ The bosun Strikes with their naval pike.

If this Strike hits, the bosun can either move the target 5 feet within the pike's reach or make a fist Strike against the target without increasing their multiple attack penalty until after the fist Strike.

SHIP CAPTAIN

The captain is the ultimate authority on a vessel, responsible for the livelihood and well-being of everyone on the ship.

SHIP CAPTAIN

CREATURE 6

LN **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +12

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +10, Athletics +12, Diplomacy +11, Intimidation +13, Sailing Lore +17, Survival +10

Str +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +0, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3

Items dagger, hand crossbow (10 bolts), leather armor, +1 rapier

AC 23; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +12, **Will** +14

HP 90

Bravery As pirate.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ rapier +17 (deadly 1d8, disarm, magical), **Damage** 1d6+10 piercing

Melee ♦ main-gauche +16 (agile, disarm, parry, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+10 piercing

Ranged ♦ hand crossbow +14 (range increment 60 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d6+6 piercing

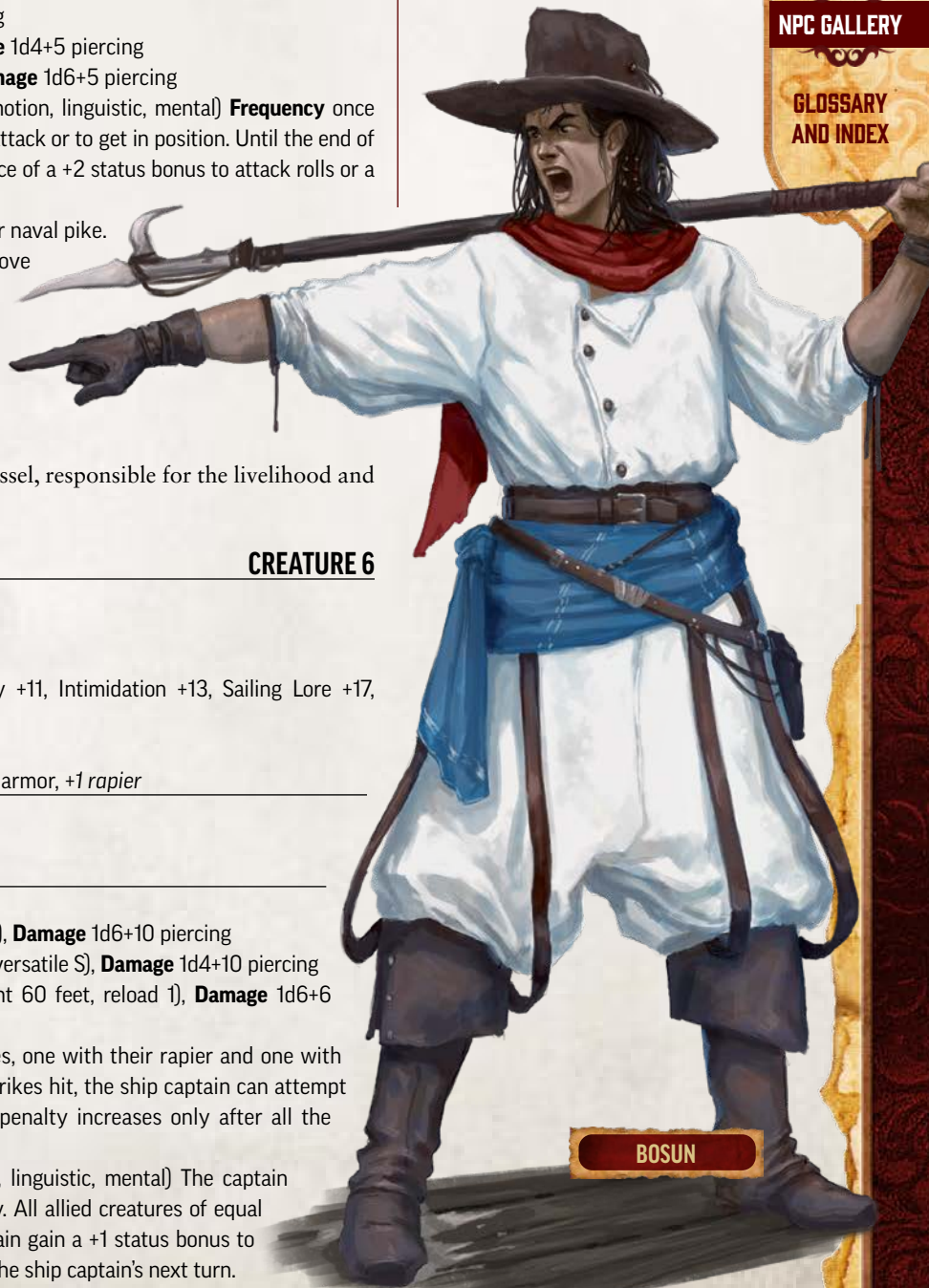
Dual Disarm ♦♦ The captain makes two Strikes, one with their rapier and one with their main-gauche (in either order). If both Strikes hit, the ship captain can attempt to Disarm the target. Their multiple attack penalty increases only after all the attacks are made.

No Quarter! ♦ (auditory, concentrate, emotion, linguistic, mental) The captain orders their shipmates to fight without mercy. All allied creatures of equal or lower level within 20 feet of the ship captain gain a +1 status bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls until the end of the ship captain's next turn.



NAUTICAL SUPERSTITIONS

- Never use phrases like "good luck," "drowned," or "goodbye."
- No whistling onboard.
- Never kill certain creatures, such as albatrosses or dolphins.
- Never change the name of a vessel without protective rites.
- Never set sail on certain days of the week.
- Tengus absorb bad luck into themselves to create good luck.



BOSUN

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COMMON ARTISAN GUILDS

Cartographers
Cobblers
Cooks and bakers
Glassblowers
Herbalists
Jewelers and gem cutters
Leatherworkers
Locksmiths
Magecrafters
Masons and stonecutters
Painters and sign makers



APPRENTICE

TRADESPEOPLE

Every settlement needs tradespeople to create new products, facilitate commerce, and keep the infrastructure from crumbling. Larger cities often have entire guilds dedicated to the creation of specific goods, managing worker conditions, and working with local governments.

APPRENTICE

Ambitious apprentices can be found in all cities. These individuals are generally younger and seek the approval of their masters as they learn their craft. Many yearn to exemplify the artistry behind their craft, one day becoming masters themselves. Depicted below is an apprentice cartographer.

APPRENTICE

CREATURE -1

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +2

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +3, Crafting +5, Geography Lore +5

Str +1, Dex +2, Con +1, Int +3, Wis +0, Cha +0

Items artisan's tools, assorted maps, rugged clothes with tool belt (functions as padded armor)

AC 15; Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +2

HP 8

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +3 (agile, versatile S), Damage 1d4+1 piercing

Ranged ♦ dagger +4 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), Damage 1d4+1 piercing

Apprentice's Ambition ♦ Frequency once per day; Requirements A direct superior is supervising the apprentice; Effect The apprentice gains a +2 circumstance bonus to attack rolls, damage rolls, saving throws, and skill checks until the end of their next turn.

MERCHANT

Small settlements can typically support one or two generalist merchants, and larger cities house multiple specialists—experts in one type of product. Merchants can be found anywhere: vendors hustling in the public square, shopkeepers running small storefronts, traveling salespeople in carriages or caravans, or wealthy tycoons running entire organizations devoted to commerce. For encounters involving negotiation or mercantile skill, a merchant is a 4th-level challenge. A merchant might have an additional Lore skill about a specific category of item (such as jewelry or magic weapons), with a total skill bonus 2 higher than Mercantile Lore.

MERCHANT

CREATURE -1

N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +6

Languages Common

Skills Deception +10, Diplomacy +12, Mercantile Lore +10, Performance +8, Society +8

Str +2, Dex +0, Con -1, Int +2, Wis +2, Cha +4

Items crossbow (10 bolts), padded armor

Appraising Eye The merchant can use Mercantile Lore to Recall Knowledge about items, including determining their value. They can also attempt to Identify Magic using Mercantile Lore and can do so without first knowing whether the item is magical.

AC 13; Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +10

HP 7

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ fist +4 (agile, nonlethal, unarmed), Damage 1d4+2 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ crossbow +4 (range increment 120 feet, reload 1), Damage 1d8 piercing

SMITH

Most smaller communities have at least one smithy where locals and travelers can have horses shod or equipment repaired. Larger settlements and cities often have a variety of smiths, many specializing in blacksmithing, weapon smithing, armor smithing, or even smelting coins in a mint. The smith is a 6th-level challenge when competing with smithing or other crafting tasks.

SMITH

CREATURE 3

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +5

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +8, Crafting +15, Diplomacy +5, Smithy Lore +15, Society +8

Str +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** +3, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0

Items artisan's tools, leather apron (functions as padded armor), light hammer

AC 17; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +5

HP 50

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ light hammer +10 (agile), **Damage** 1d6+3 bludgeoning plus smith's fury

Ranged ♦ light hammer +8 (agile, thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 1d6+3 bludgeoning plus smith's fury

Smith's Fury The smith deals an additional 1d6 damage when they hit with a weapon they created.

GUILDMASTER

In cities, artisans working in a common trade often form guilds to set standards of quality, establish common prices, engage in collective bargaining with business owners, and lobby local governments for favorable laws. The guildmaster—often a master artisan in their own right—also acts as an administrator and politician, advocating for artisans in their trade. The guildmaster is a 12th-level challenge when competing in crafting or their area of expertise (architecture in the example below).

GUILDMASTER

CREATURE 8

N **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**

Perception +16

Languages Common

Skills Architecture Lore +25, Athletics +13, Bureaucracy Lore +19, Crafting +25, Diplomacy +24, Intimidation +22, Society +21

Str +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +1, **Int** +4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3

Items artisan's tools, construction schematics, guildmaster's uniform (functions as hide armor), +1 striking light hammer, tax ledgers

AC 26; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +14, **Will** +17

HP 135

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ light hammer +16 (agile), **Damage** 2d6+5 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ light hammer +14 (agile, magical, thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 2d6+5 bludgeoning

Call to Action ♦ (auditory, concentrate, emotion, mental) The guildmaster gives a speech to inspire themselves and all guild-member allies within 60 feet, granting them a +1 status bonus to attack and damage rolls until the start of the guildmaster's next turn.

Sworn Duty While within the guild or presiding over guild business, the guildmaster gains a +2 circumstance bonus to weapon attack rolls and deals an additional 2d6 damage on a successful weapon attack.



MORE ARTISAN GUILDS

Physicians and apothecaries

Potion brewers

Potters

Scroll keepers

Shipwrights and sailmakers

Skinner and tanners

Wagonmakers and wheelwrights

Weaponsmiths

Wandcrafters

Weavers

Woodcarvers and coopers



GUILDMASTER

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SABOTAGE!

Though the saboteur included here is intended to be a villain, PCs might encounter saboteurs on the side of good. These are typically rebels against tyrannical forces. Those who take great care to avoid harming civilians are chaotic good; others are chaotic neutral.

VILLAINS

Villains pursue selfish and cruel goals, trampling over anyone foolish or purehearted enough to stand in their way.

SABOTEUR

Saboteurs excel at infiltration, using it to perform destructive acts, whether they are the physical destruction of a valuable object or obstructing important political proceedings. Unlike those of spies, the motivations of saboteurs is not to steal information, but rather to sow chaos among their enemies.

SABOTEUR

CREATURE 2

NE **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**
Perception +8 (+10 to find traps)

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +5, Crafting +6 (+8 to Craft snares), Deception +7, Diplomacy +5, Engineering Lore +8, Intimidation +5, Society +6, Stealth +9, Survival +6, Thievery +9, Underworld Lore +6

Str +1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1

Items crowbar, disguise kit, hand crossbow (10 bolts), padded armor, sap, snare kit, thieves' tools

Snare Crafting The saboteur can Craft snares and has the supplies to make up to two caltrop snares and up to two hampering snares.

AC 18 (20 vs. traps); **Fort** +5, **Ref** +9 (+11 vs. traps), **Will** +8
HP 27

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ sap +7 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d6+3 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ hand crossbow +9 (range increment 60 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d6+2 piercing

Sneak Attack The saboteur deals an extra 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

MASTERMIND

Masterminds weave long-ranged plots to see their nefarious goals come to fruition, deftly manipulating those around them, and turning enemies into friends and then pitting them against one another. When competing in a social or intellectual arena, the mastermind is a 7th-level challenge.

MASTERMIND

CREATURE 4

NE **MEDIUM** **HUMAN** **HUMANOID**
Perception +10

Languages Common

Skills Arcana +13, Deception +15, Diplomacy +15, Intimidation +15, Occultism +15, Performance +17, Religion +11, Society +17, Stealth +9, Thievery +9, Underworld Lore +17

Str +0, **Dex** +3, **Con** +0, **Int** +4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

Items chain shirt, disguise kit, hand crossbow (10 bolts), shortsword

Versatile Performance The mastermind can use Performance instead of Diplomacy to Make an Impression and instead of Intimidation to Demoralize. The mastermind can also use an acting Performance instead of Deception to Impersonate.

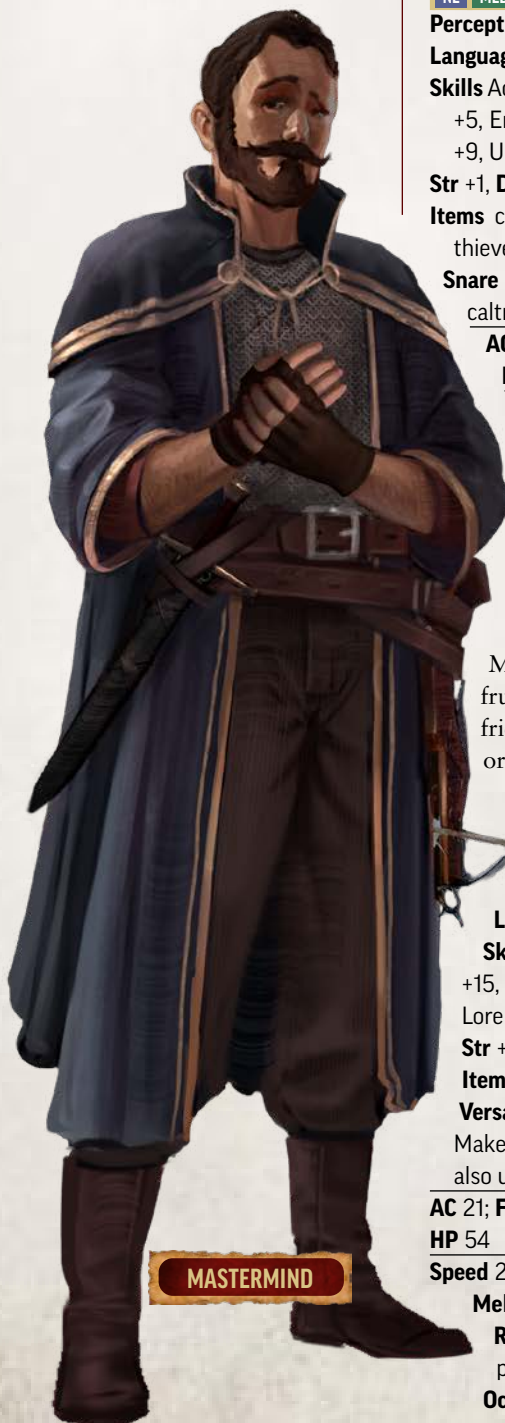
AC 21; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +11, **Will** +16
HP 54

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ shortsword +13 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d6+6 slashing

Ranged ♦ hand crossbow +13 (range increment 60 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d6+3 piercing

Occult Spontaneous Spells DC 22, attack +14; **2nd** (3 slots) *blur*, *charm*, *invisibility*,



MASTERMIND

paranoia; **1st** (3 slots) *charm, illusory disguise, illusory object*; **Cantrips (2nd)** *daze, detect magic, message, prestidigitation, sigil*

Bard Composition Spells DC 22; **Cantrips (2nd)** *inspire competence* (Core Rulebook 386), *inspire courage* (Core Rulebook 386)

Scoundrel's Feint When the mastermind successfully Feints, the target is flat-footed against the mastermind's melee attacks until the end of the mastermind's next turn. On a critical success, the target is flat-footed against all melee attacks for that time, not just the mastermind's.

Sneak Attack The mastermind deals an extra 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

ANTIPALADIN

There is perhaps nothing more anathematic to peace than an antipaladin. Dedicated holy warriors to the darkest and foulest of deities, antipaladins work to fulfill the vile wishes of their evil masters. The zeal with which they implement the plans of dark gods makes them truly fearsome foes for anyone allied with the forces of good.

ANTIPALADIN

CREATURE 5

CE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +10

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +13, Deception +10, Intimidation +12, Religion +8, Survival +8

Str +4, **Dex** +1, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +3

Items lesser cheetah's elixir, greataxe, half plate, javelin (10)

AC 25; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +10, **Will** +12

HP 75

Destructive Vengeance ☞ (divine, necromancy) **Trigger** An enemy within 15 feet damages the antipaladin; **Effect** The antipaladin increases the amount of damage they take by 2d6 and deals 2d6 damage to the triggering enemy, choosing evil or negative damage. In addition, the antipaladin deals 2 extra damage of the chosen type with their Strikes against the triggering creature until the end of the antipaladin's next turn.

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ greataxe +15 (sweep), **Damage** 1d12+10 slashing

Ranged ♦ javelin +12 (thrown 30 feet), **Damage** 1d6+10 piercing

Champion Devotion Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 20; **3rd touch of corruption** (see below)

Intimidating Strike ♦♦ The antipaladin makes a melee Strike. If they hit and deal damage, the target is frightened 1, or frightened 2 on a critical hit.

TOUCH OF CORRUPTION

FOCUS 3

UNCOMMON NECROMANCY NEGATIVE

Cast ♦ somatic

Range touch; **Targets** 1 willing undead creature or 1 living creature

The antipaladin infuses the target with negative energy. If the target is living, this deals 3d6 negative damage (basic Fortitude save); on a failed saving throw, the target also takes a -2 status penalty to AC for 1 round. If the target is a willing undead creature, the target regains 18 Hit Points, and if it is one of the antipaladin's allies, it also gains a +2 status bonus to damage rolls for 1 round.



SERVANTS OF DESTRUCTION

Antipaladins are the polar opposite of paladins: chaotic evil warriors devoted to destruction. Much like champions of good, they must follow a code. Their code exhorts evil and prohibits selfless acts. Antipaladins usually serve Lamashtu, Rovagug, or demon lords. Many antipaladins used to be champions of good and seek to destroy their former faiths.



ANTIPALADIN



ALTER EGO MUTAGEN

A reckless scientist may have a special mutagen with a 1-round onset that transforms them into another specific NPC or monster of their level, with the same duration as other mutagens. All statistics change, though HP changes only if the new maximum HP is lower than the scientist's current HP.

DESPOT

Despots live to amass and exploit power over others.

DESPOT

CREATURE 5

LE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +11

Languages Common, Infernal

Skills Athletics +10, Deception +13, Diplomacy +12, Intimidation +13, Performance +13, Society +12, Warfare Lore +10

Str +2, Dex +2, Con +0, Int +4, Wis +2, Cha +4

Items lesser darkvision elixir, *minor healing potion* (2), spiked gauntlet

Persistent Lies Any creature deceived by the despot's Deception skill believes the deception more readily on the next day. Any attempts to later attempt a Perception check against the despot's Deception DC take a -2 circumstance penalty, as do other creatures' attempts to convince the creature otherwise, such as through Diplomacy or further Deception.

AC 19; Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +13

HP 56

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ spiked gauntlet +11 (agile), Damage 1d4+4 piercing

Divine Spontaneous Spells DC 23, attack +13; **3rd** (4 slots) *chilling darkness*, *enthrall*, *harm*; **2nd** *calm emotions*, *flaming sphere*, *see invisibility*, *undetectable alignment*; **1st** (4 slots) *charm*, *command*, *fear*, *sanctuary*; **Cantrips** (3rd) *chill touch*, *daze*, *message*, *produce flame*, *shield*

Sorcerer Bloodline Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 22; **3rd** *diabolic edict* (Core Rulebook 403)

Bloodline Magic When the despot casts a bloodline spell, *enthrall*, *flaming sphere*, or *charm*, either a target takes 1 fire damage per spell level, or the despot gains a +1 status bonus to Deception checks for 1 round.

Dangerous Sorcery When the despot Casts a Spell from a spell slot, if the spell deals damage and doesn't have a duration, the despot gains a status bonus equal to the spell's level to that spell's damage.

RECKLESS SCIENTIST

It's the reckless scientist's job to break the rules of reality, no matter the cost.

RECKLESS SCIENTIST

CREATURE 6

NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +10

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +12, Crafting +17, Deception +9, Engineering Lore +15, Medicine +10, Stealth +12, Underworld Lore +13

Str +1, Dex +4, Con +5, Int +5, Wis +2, Cha -1

Items alchemist's tools, moderate antidote, moderate antiplague, bandolier, +1 sickle, work coat (functions as padded armor)

Infused Items A reckless scientist carries the following infused items: 2 moderate acid flasks, 2 moderate alchemist's fires, 1 lesser bomber's eye elixir, 2 moderate frost vials, and 3 lesser elixirs of life. These items last for 24 hours, or until the next time the scientist makes their daily preparations.

AC 23; Fort +17, Ref +14, Will +10; +1 status to all saves vs. poison

HP 92; Resistances poison 5

Unstable Compounds When an attacker scores a critical hit against the reckless scientist, one of the scientist's poorly stowed alchemical items bursts. The GM determines the item randomly. If it was a bomb, the alchemist takes damage from the bomb, and any creature adjacent to the alchemist takes the splash damage. Any other item is simply wasted.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ sickle +17 (agile, finesse, magical, trip), Damage 1d4+7 slashing

RECKLESS SCIENTIST

Ranged ♦ alchemical bomb +16 (range increment 20 feet, splash), **Damage** varies by bomb
Quick Bomber ♦ The reckless scientist Interacts to draw a bomb, then Strikes with it.

Reckless Alchemy ♦ (concentrate, manipulate) **Requirements** The reckless scientist is holding a bomb or elixir; **Effect** The reckless scientist combines the bomb with another bomb or the elixir with another elixir. They can Interact to draw a second bomb or elixir if necessary as part of this action. They attempt a DC 28 Crafting check, destroying both component items to create one new item. If a viable resulting item isn't used by the end of the scientist's next turn, it explodes as described under critical failure.

Critical Success The new item has the full effect of both component items when used.

Success The new item combines both items, but halves the effect of each. (This halves damage for bombs, the amount of healing of elixirs of life, or the duration for effects that can't have their value halved. Details are determined by the GM.)

Failure The new item is inert.

Critical Failure The new item immediately explodes, dealing 3d6 piercing damage to the reckless scientist.

GANG LEADER

Cutthroats, killers, thieves, and toughs prey upon the vulnerable of society. Directing their activities and keeping them in line are the duties of the gang leader.

GANG LEADER

CREATURE 7

CE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +14

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +13, Athletics +13, Deception +15, Intimidation +17, Society +11, Stealth +13, Thievery +15, Underworld Lore +15

Str +4, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +2, **Wis** -1, **Cha** +4

Items *minor potion of healing*, +1 *shortsword*, sling (10 bullets), studded leather, tanglefoot bag

AC 26; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +17, **Will** +10

HP 104

Deny Advantage The gang leader isn't flat-footed to creatures of 7th level or lower that are hidden, undetected, flanking, or using surprise attack.

Evasion When the gang leader rolls a success on a Reflex save, they get a critical success instead.

Surprise Attack On the first round of combat, if the gang leader rolls Deception or Stealth for initiative, creatures who haven't acted are flat-footed to the gang leader.

Nimble Dodge ⤵ **Trigger** The gang leader is targeted with an attack by an attacker they can see; **Effect** The gang leader gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against the triggering attack.

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ *shortsword* +18 (agile, magical, versatile S),
Damage 1d6+10 piercing

Ranged ♦ sling +18 (propulsive, range increment 50 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d6+8 bludgeoning

Brutal Rally ⤵ (auditory, emotion, linguistic, mental) **Trigger** The gang leader rolls a critical hit against a creature; **Effect** All allies that can see the gang leader gain a +1 circumstance bonus to attack rolls until the start of the gang leader's next turn.

Gang Up Any enemy is flat-footed against the gang leader's melee attacks due to flanking as long as the enemy is within melee reach of both the gang leader and one of the gang leader's allies.

Quick Draw ♦ The gang leader Interacts to draw a weapon, then Strikes with that weapon.

Sneak Attack The gang leader deals an extra 2d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.



GANG STRUCTURE

A gang leader might run a gang, but several other NPCs in this chapter make for good gang members. A gang of significant size typically has a pyramid structure so that only a few members report directly to the boss and it's harder to link crimes directly to those in charge if someone gets arrested.



GANG LEADER



GLOSSARY AND INDEX

This appendix contains page references for key terms appearing in this book, partial definitions for many rules and concepts, and full definitions for the traits introduced in this book. Definitions of other traits used in this book can be found in the Glossary and Index beginning on page 628 of the *Core Rulebook*.

Abaddon (plane) The neutral evil Outer Plane, a wasteland home to soul-devouring daemons and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. 142

Ability Points Points used to purchase ability scores in a point-buy ability score variant rule. 182

ability scores (variant rule) These variant rules include an alternate ability score system that works entirely through Ability Points, plus ways to distribute what each ability score impacts more evenly. 182

Abyss (plane) The chaotic evil Outer Plane where demons and gliphoth fight for dominion. 142

access Certain uncommon abilities, feats, and other options have an Access entry. Characters who meet the criteria in the entry gain access to that option. 35

acolyte of Nethys (NPC) 212

acrobat (NPC) 236

addiction (affliction) 120

adept (NPC) 228

adjudicating rules 12, 28

adventures

designing 40

styles 41

threats 43

advisor (NPC) 207

aerial combat 15

affliction 116

air (trait) Planes with this trait consist mostly of open spaces and air with various degrees of turbulence, though they also contain rare islands of floating stone and other elements and energies. 137

alignment (variant rule) These variant rules contain options for removing alignment and an incremental alignment system. 184

ancestry adjustment Simple changes added to an NPC stat block to represent a specific ancestry. 204

animate dream Independent creatures formed when a powerful mortal dreamer wakes from a particularly vivid dream. 145

antipaladin (NPC) 247

apothecary (NPC) 220

apprentice (NPC) 244

aquatic combat 15

archer sentry (NPC) 233

artifact (trait) Items with this trait are artifacts. These magic items can't be crafted by normal means, and they can't be damaged by normal means. Artifacts are always rare or unique. 106

aspect The overarching concepts a specific relic embodies, dictating the types of gifts that relic can gain. 95

assassin (NPC) 211

Astral Plane A Transitive Plane that separates the Inner Sphere from the planes of the Outer Sphere. 140

astronomer (NPC) 241

Awareness Points A measure of the opposition's awareness of the PCs' efforts during an infiltration. As Awareness Points increase, the infiltration becomes more challenging. 161

Axis (plane) The lawful neutral Outer Plane is a perfectly structured, near-infinite city populated by aeons. 142

azer Short, sturdy, and industrious humanoids native to the Elemental Plane of Fire. 140

background (variant rule) Replace simply selecting a background with a series of steps that flesh out more of the character's backstory. 186

bandit (NPC) 208

barkeep (NPC) 238

barrister (NPC) 232

beast tamer (NPC) 237

beggar (NPC) 214

Board ♦ (action) Board a vehicle. 175

bodyguard (NPC) 226

Boneyard (plane) The neutral Outer Plane, a great spire rising into the Astral Plane where souls of the dead are judged and sent on to their respective afterlives. 142

bosun (NPC) 243

bounty hunter (NPC) 227

Bullying Press ➤ (action) A dueling reaction to make your opponent frightened on a successful Strike. 167

burglar (NPC) 210

campaign

rewards 38

starting and ending 39

structure 36

captain of the guard (NPC) 234

Change Tradition Focus ♦ (action) Change your tradition focus in a spellcasting duel. 167

charlatan (NPC) 209

Chase Points These points represent the ability of an entire party to bypass an obstacle in the chase subsystem. 156

chase subsystem A short-term subsystem wherein the PCs progress through various situations and obstacles. 156

chronicler (NPC) 216

city (trait) Settlements with this trait tend to be relatively large, with levels typically ranging from 5 to 7. 134

class features (variant rule) Build characters who gain feats in different ways. 192

commoner (NPC) 214

courtiers 206

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converting from First Edition 60

designing abilities 67

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criminals 208

cult leader (NPC) 230

cultist (NPC) 229

curse (trait) Afflictions with this trait are manifestations of potent ill will. A curse either lasts a specified amount of time or can be removed only by certain actions a character must perform or conditions they must meet. A curse with stages follows the rules for afflictions. 116

curse (affliction) 116

cursed (trait) An item with this trait is cursed to cause trouble for its owner. A curse isn't detected when the item is identified, though a critical success reveals both the presence and exact nature of the curse. Cursed items can't be discarded once they've been triggered or invested the first time. The item can be removed only if the curse is removed. 90

dancer (NPC) 236

Deceptive Sidestep ➤ (action) A dueling reaction forcing your opponent to roll again and use the second result. 167

deities 127

demiplane A smaller, limited plane either created for specific purposes or arising from planar phenomena. 145

demonologist (NPC) 231

Denizen of Leng Humanoid residents of the area of the Dreamlands known as the Plateau of Leng. 145

despot (NPC) 248

devotees 212

Dimension of Time (dimension) A hidden dimension that simultaneously contains all time across all planes. 145

dimension Similar to planes, dimensions have an infinite scale and overlay every other plane simultaneously, including one another. 144

Discover (action) Watch or study an NPC to learn more about that NPC's preferences; used in the influence subsystem. 151

disease (trait) An effect with this trait inflicts one or more diseases. A disease is typically an affliction. 118

dockhand (NPC) 222

downtime

events 25

long-term goals 22

downtrodden 214

Dreamlands (dimension) A dimension created and sustained by the collective dreams of sleeping mortals. 145

Drive ➤ to ➤➤➤ (action) Pilot a vehicle to move. 175

drug (trait) An item with this trait is a drug, a poison that conveys short-term benefits in addition to harmful side effects and long-term consequences. Each time a creature uses a given drug it must also attempt a saving throw against addiction to that drug. 120

drug (affliction) 120

drunkard (NPC) 239

dual-class character (variant rule) A character who has the full benefits of two different classes. 192

duel subsystem A subsystem for a one-on-one combat or spellcasting competition wherein the participants abide by specific rules agreed upon before the duel begins. 166

Dueling Counter ➤ (action) Expend a prepared spell or spell slot to attempt to counteract a spell. 167

d'ziriak Reclusive, sapient insect-like creatures native to the Shadow Plane. 141

earth (trait) Planes with this trait are mostly solid, with caverns and other hollow pockets. 137

Edge Points These points represent special advantages a party can gain before or during an infiltration, which they can spend to more easily overcome an obstacle. 162

Elysium (plane) The chaotic good Outer Plane, a realm of wild, idealized natural beauty populated primarily by azatas. 143

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dynamic 48

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Encouraging Words ➤ (feat) Bolster an ally to regain Stamina Points during combat; used in the stamina variant rules. 201

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in hexploration 172

in worldbuilding 123

erratic (trait) Planes with this trait have a flow of time that slows down or speeds up relative to other planes. 137

Ethereal Plane A misty Transitive Plane overlapping each of the planes of the Inner Sphere, formed by the interacting tidal forces of creation and destruction from the Positive and Negative Energy Planes. 141

executioner (NPC) 235

exploration

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running 17

explorers 216

false priest (NPC) 229

farmer (NPC) 222

feats (variant rule) Build characters who gain feats in different ways. 192

fence (NPC) 210

fetcling (kayal) Members of this ancestry are descended from humans who long ago became trapped on the Shadow Plane. 141

finite (trait) Planes with this trait consist of a limited amount of space. 136

fire (trait) Planes with this trait are composed of flames that continually burn with no fuel source. Fire planes are extremely hostile to non-fire creatures. 137

First World (plane) The First World was a first draft of the Material Plane, crafted by the gods to test their metaphysical crafting materials and palettes before setting it aside to create the Material Plane as a second, final version of their work. 141

flowing (trait) Planes with this trait have a flow of time that is consistently faster or slower than that of other planes. 137

foresters 218

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Fortify Camp (action) Spend time fortifying your camp for defense; used in the hexploration subsystem. 173

gang leader (NPC) 249

getting lost 21

gift A magical benefit granted by a relic. Gifts are categorized into three tiers representing their power: minor, major, and grand. 96

grave robber (NPC) 208

gravedigger (NPC) 223

Great Old One A powerful alien entity akin to a demigod in power. 108, 139

group activity In the hexploration subsystem, group activities require the entire party to work together in order to be effective. They count as one of the day's hexploration activities for the whole group. 172

group size 33

guard (NPC) 232

guide (NPC) 217

guildmaster (NPC) 245

harbormaster (NPC) 225

harrow reader (NPC) 228

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healers 220

Heaven (plane) The lawful good Outer Plane, a great seven-tiered mountain devoted to defending the innocent and destroying the wicked. 143

Hell (plane) The lawful evil Outer Plane is a realm of tyranny and perfectly ordered, malignant law, inhabited primarily by devils. 144

Hero Points 9

hexploration subsystem A subsystem for exploration using an overland map divided into hexagonal sections of territory. 170

high gravity (trait) Planes with this trait have gravitational forces much stronger than those on the Material Plane. 136

house rules The collection of rulings on, changes to, and additions to the written rules the GM and players collectively agree to use during their games. 29

hunter (NPC) 219

immeasurable (trait) Planes with this trait are immeasurably large, perhaps infinite. 136

Infiltration Points A measure of the heroes' progress toward overcoming obstacles during an infiltration. 160

infiltration subsystem A subsystem providing a framework for a party to achieve objectives through subtlety rather than direct confrontation. 160

Influence (action) Attempt to make a favorable impression on an NPC to convince the NPC to support your cause; used in the influence subsystem. 151

Influence Points These points, used in the influence subsystem, measure a character's growing sway over a particular NPC. 151

influence subsystem A short-term subsystem wherein the PCs

accumulate Influence Points during a social encounter with an NPC to represent their increasing influence. 151

initiative 11

Inner Sphere The planes of the Inner Sphere form the heart of the cosmos. The most prominent are the Material Plane, the Elemental Planes, and the Positive and Negative Energy Planes. 138

innkeeper (NPC) 239

intelligent (trait) An item with this trait is intelligent and has its own will and personality, as well as several statistics that most items don't have. Intelligent items can't be crafted by normal means, and they are always rare or unique. 88

investigation A type of exploration scene wherein the PCs learn more about a situation, solve a puzzle, or uncover mysteries. 21

item

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- cursed 90
- gems and art objects 114
- intelligent 88
- magic item variant rules 196
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- relics 94

jailer (NPC) 233

judge (NPC) 224

kyoti Xenophobic winged, birdlike creatures native to the Positive Energy Plane. 139

laborers 222

leadership subsystem A long-term subsystem wherein one or more PCs establish a fledgling organization and accumulate followers over time. 168

Leng spider A species of immense, intelligent spiders native to the Plateau of Leng in the Dreamlands. 145

level 0 character (variant rule) Play through your characters' adventures before they take on character classes. 195

librarian (NPC) 240

library The setting in which the characters perform research when using the research subsystem. A library can be a vault of books or any other repository of information. 154

low gravity (trait) Planes with this trait have gravitational forces much weaker than those on the Material Plane. 136

Maelstrom (plane) The chaotic neutral Outer Plane is an ancient ocean of raw chaos, eternally wearing away portions of other planes and inhabited primarily by proteans. 144

mage for hire (NPC) 226

magistrates 224

Map the Area (action) Create an accurate map of a hex; used in the hexploration subsystem. 173

maps and mapping

- drawing maps 52
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mastermind (NPC) 246

Material Plane The plane containing the prosaic universe, and the home of mortal life. 138

mercenaries 226

merchant (NPC) 244

metagaming A player using knowledge they have but their character lacks to inform their character's decisions and actions in the game. 9

metamorphic (trait) On planes with this trait, the plane's physical nature can be changed by things other than physical force or magic. 137

metropolis (trait) Settlements with this trait are the largest of cities, often with a level of 8 or higher. 134

microgravity (trait) Planes with this trait have little to no gravity. 136

miner (NPC) 223

monster hunter (NPC) 227

mounted combat 14

movement 14

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nation 125, 130

navigator (NPC) 242

necromancer (NPC) 230

negative (trait) Planes with this trait are vast, empty reaches that suck the life from the living. 137

Negative Energy Plane A plane in the Inner Sphere suffused with negative energy, home to scadeuinars, wraiths, and undead. 139

Nirvana (plane) The neutral good Outer Plane is the realm of purest good, a plane that promises sanctuary to the weary and enlightenment and transcendence to those who seek it out. 144

noble (NPC) 206

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Outer Sphere The planes of the Outer Sphere are the realms of alignment: chaos, evil, good, law, neutrality, and their admixtures, populated by celestials, fiends, monitors, and others who embody and promote these moral concepts. 141

palace guard (NPC) 206

Pathfinder Society Organized Play A worldwide organization of players and GMs playing in a shared, ongoing Pathfinder campaign. 33, 165

performers 236

petitioner The soul of a dead mortal who has been judged and sent on to whichever plane best reflects the life they led. 138

physician (NPC) 220

piloting check A skill check required to perform certain actions when piloting a vehicle. 175

pirate (NPC) 242

plague doctor (NPC) 221

Plane of Air The innermost of the Elemental Planes, a vast realm of wind, storms, and skies. 139

Plane of Earth An Elemental Plane situated between the Plane of Fire and Plane of Water, consisting of a thick, rocky shell riddled with vast caverns and open pockets. 139

Plane of Fire This Elemental Plane is a perpetual ocean of fire with skies of smoke, storms of raining cinders, and lakes and rivers of magma flowing along its border with the Elemental Plane of Earth. 140

Plane of Water An Elemental Plane located between the Plane of Air and the Plane of Earth, consisting of a nearly limitless expanse of saline, fresh, and brackish seas teeming with oceanic life. 140

planes Vast or infinite realms that each embody some foundational aspect of reality, existing beyond and in addition to the physical universe. 136

player

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needs 34

problematic 31

poacher (NPC) 218

poison (trait) An effect with this trait delivers a poison or deals poison damage. An item with this trait is poisonous and might cause an affliction. 120

positive (trait) Planes with this trait are awash with life energy of such intensity that it can harm living creatures. 137

Positive Energy Plane A plane in the Inner Sphere that contains the source of all positive energy in the multiverse. 139

potency bonus A special bonus used only in the automatic bonus progression variant rule for magic items, representing a character's innate ability and replacing the item bonus to rolls and DCs (except armor's item bonus). 196

priest of Pharasma (NPC) 213

primeval inevitable The first of the inevitables produced by the axiomites for their war against the proteans have since ascended to become demigods. 142

prisoner (NPC) 215

proficiency (variant rule) A proficiency without level system changes the fundamental math of the proficiency system to tell stories where being outnumbered by weaker foes remains a challenge and high-level characters are less superhuman. 198

prophet (NPC) 212

propulsion The means by which a vehicle moves, often imposing additional rules on the vehicle. 174

publicans 238

qliphoth The original inhabitants of the Abyss, inhuman monstrosities of pure chaos and malice. 142

quintessence A philosophically aligned material with infinite potential for shape and state that conforms to powerful and prevailing beliefs. 137

Rally (action) Quickly encourage an ally to regain Stamina Points; used in the stamina variant rules. 201

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rarity How often something is encountered in the game world. The rarities are common, uncommon, rare, and unique. Any rules element that doesn't list a rarity is common. 35

reckless (trait) Actions with the reckless trait run the risk of the pilot losing control of a vehicle. When performing a reckless action, the pilot must first attempt an appropriate piloting check to keep control of the vehicle. 176

reckless scientist (NPC) 248

Reconnoiter (action) Survey and explore a specific area to find unusual features and specific sites; used in the hexploration subsystem. 173

Reputation Points In the reputation subsystem, these points measure a character's social standing with a given group of people. 164

reputation subsystem A mid- to long-term subsystem wherein the PCs accumulate or lose Reputation Points with a particular group of people. 164

Research (action) Comb through information to learn more about the topic at hand and gain Research Points; used in the research subsystem. 154

Research Points (RP) Points representing the progress a party makes toward discovering information in the research subsystem. 154

research subsystem A short-term subsystem used when the party needs to discover information within a time limit or other restrictions. 154

Resolve Points A pool of points in the stamina variant rules representing a character's intrinsic grit and luck. 200


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ruffian (NPC) 209

Run Over  (action) Run over or ram creatures with a vehicle you're piloting. 176

saboteur (NPC) 246

sage (NPC) 241


sandbox A game where the GM presents an open world and the players explore as they like, rather than a GM-directed narrative. 44

sceaduinar The most common inhabitants of the Negative Energy Plane, crystalline humanoids formed from pure negative energy. 139

scholars 240

seafarers 242

secret check 8

Sense Weakness  (action) A dueling reaction to make your opponent flat-footed against your Strike. 167

sentient (trait) Planes with this trait can change their physical nature according to the plane's own whim. 137

servant (NPC) 222

server (NPC) 238

session zero A session for building characters as a group before the campaign officially begins. 7

settlement 126, 132

shadow (trait) Planes with this trait are umbral with murky light and suppress all light sources. 138

Shadow Plane A murky, distorted, and imperfect mirror of the Material Plane that overlaps the Material Plane and serves as a buffer or conduit between it and the Negative Energy Plane. 141

ship captain (NPC) 243


Skill Points (variant rule) In a more granular system, characters spend Skill Points to choose and hone their skills. 199


smith (NPC) 245

spy (NPC) 207

Stamina Points (variant rule) Stamina Points represent a character's energy and readiness. They're reduced by damage just like Hit Points, but a character always loses their Stamina Points first, and loses Hit Points only if they're out of Stamina Points. 200

static (trait) The physical nature of a plane with this trait can't be changed in any way. 137

Steel Your Resolve  (feat) Regain Stamina Points quickly during a fight; used in the stamina variant rules. 201

Stop  (action) Bring a vehicle to a stop. 176


strange gravity (trait) On planes with this trait, all bodies of mass, regardless of size, are centers of gravity with roughly the same amount of force. 136

subjective gravity (trait) On planes with this trait, all bodies of mass can be centers of gravity with the same amount of force, but only if a non-mindless creature wills it. 136

surgeon (NPC) 221

surprise attack 21

Take a Breather (action) Rest for 10 minutes to regain Stamina Points; used in the stamina variant rules. 200

Take Control  (action) Become the pilot of an uncontrolled vehicle. 176

tax collector (NPC) 224

teacher (NPC) 240

threat level Encounters in a published adventure give an indication of the expected party level and how difficult that encounter is for that level of party. 16

timeless (trait) On planes with this trait, time still passes but its effects are diminished. 137

tomb raider (NPC) 217

torchbearer (NPC) 216

total party kill (TPK) A situation in which every character in the party dies, sometimes ending the campaign prematurely. 30

touch of corruption (focus spell) 247

town (trait) Settlements with this trait are modest in size, with a level usually ranging from 2-4. 134

tracker (NPC) 219

tradespeople 244

Transitive Plane A collection of planes that each coexist with one or more other planes, often used to facilitate interplanar travel. The most prominent are the Astral Plane, the Ethereal Plane, the First World, and the Shadow Plane. 140

Travel (action) Progress toward moving into an adjacent hex; used in the hexploration subsystem. 172

troubadour (NPC) 237

unbounded (trait) Planes with this trait loop back on themselves when a creature reaches the plane's edge. 136

unexpected difficulty 16

urchin (NPC) 215

vehicle Vehicles are various means of transportation, often with specific purposes, that come into play during encounters and exploration. 174

velstrac Horrific fiends residing on the Shadow Plane who seek ultimate sensation and perfection through self-mutilation. 141

Victory Points (VP) A flexible point-based subsystem for tracking progress toward a goal. 148

village (trait) Settlements with this trait tend to be small and usually have a level no higher than 1. 134

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in NPC gallery 246

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virulent (trait) Afflictions with the virulent trait are harder to remove. You must succeed at two consecutive saves to reduce a virulent affliction's stage by 1. A critical success reduces a virulent affliction's stage by only 1 instead of by 2.

warden (NPC) 225

watch officer (NPC) 234

water (trait) Planes with this trait are mostly liquid, perhaps with pockets of breathable air. 137

worldbuilding Creating a campaign setting of your own design. 122

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